

Rules of St Benedict.

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St. Benedict of Nursia.

Founder of western monasticism, born at Nursia, c. 480; died at Monte Cassino, 543. The only authentic life of Benedict of Nursia is that contained in the second book of St. Gregory's "Dialogues." It is rather a character sketch than a biography and consists, for the most part, of a number of miraculous incidents, which, although they illustrate the life of the saint, give little help towards a chronological account of his career. St. Gregory's authorities for all that he relates were the saint's own disciples, viz. Constantinus, who succeeded him as Abbot of Monte Cassino; and Honoratus, who was Abbot of Subiaco when St. Gregory wrote his "Dialogues."

Benedict was the son of a Roman noble of Nursia, a small town near Spoleto, and a tradition, which St. Bede accepts, makes him a twin with his sister Scholastica. His boyhood was spent in Rome, where he lived with his parents and attended the schools until he had reached his higher studies. Then "giving over his books, and forsaking his father's house and wealth, with a mind only to serve God, he sought for some place where he might attain to the desire of his holy purpose; and in this sort he departed [from Rome], instructed with learned ignorance and furnished with unlearned wisdom" (Dial. St. Greg., II, Introd. in Migne, P.L. LXVI). There is much difference of opinion as to Benedict's age at the time. It has been very generally stated as fourteen, but a careful examination of St. Gregory's narrative makes it impossible to suppose him younger than nineteen or twenty. He was old enough to be in the midst of his literary studies, to understand the real meaning and worth of the dissolute and licentious lives of his companions, and to have been deeply affected himself by the love of a woman (Ibid. II, 2). He was capable of weighing all these things in comparison with the life taught in the Gospels, and chose the latter. He was at the beginning of life, and he had at his disposal the means to a career as a Roman noble; clearly he was not a child, As St. Gregory expresses it, "he was in the world and was free to enjoy the advantages which the world offers, but drew back his foot which he had, as it were, already set forth in the world" (ibid., Introd.). If we accept the date 480 for his birth, we may fix the date of his abandoning the schools and quitting home at about A.D. 500.

Benedict does not seem to have left Rome for the purpose of becoming a hermit, but only to find some place away from the life of the great city; moreover, he took his old nurse with him as a servant and they settled down to live in Enfide, near a church dedicated to St. Peter, in some kind of association with "a company of virtuous men" who were in sympathy with his feelings and his views of life. Enfide, which the tradition of Subiaco identifies with the modern Affile, is in the Simbrucini mountains, about forty miles from Rome and two from Subiaco. It stands on the crest of a ridge which rises rapidly from the valley to the higher range of mountains, and seen from the lower ground the village has the appearance of a fortress. As St. Gregory's account indicates, and as is confirmed by the remains of the old town and by the inscriptions found in the neighbourhood, Enfide was a place of greater importance than is the present town. At Enfide Benedict worked his first miracle by restoring to perfect condition an earthenware wheat-sifter (*capisterium*) which his old servant had accidentally broken. The notoriety which this miracle brought upon Benedict drove him to escape still farther from social life, and "he fled secretly from his nurse and sought the more retired district of Subiaco." His purpose of life had also been modified. He had fled Rome to escape the evils of a great city; he now determined to be poor and to live by his own work. "For God's sake he deliberately chose the hardships of life and the weariness of labour" (ibid., 1).

A short distance from Enfide is the entrance to a narrow, gloomy valley, penetrating the mountains and leading directly to Subiaco. Crossing the Anio and turning to the right, the path rises along the left face of the ravine and soon reaches the site of Nero's villa and of the huge

mole which formed the lower end of the middle lake; across the valley were ruins of the Roman baths, of which a few great arches and detached masses of wall still stand. Rising from the mole upon twenty five low arches, the foundations of which can even yet be traced, was the bridge from the villa to the baths, under which the waters of the middle lake poured in a wide fall into the lake below. The ruins of these vast buildings and the wide sheet of falling water closed up the entrance of the valley to St. Benedict as he came from Enfide; to-day the narrow valley lies open before us, closed only by the far off mountains. The path continues to ascend, and the side of the ravine, on which it runs, becomes steeper, until we reach a cave above which the mountain now rises almost perpendicularly; while on the right hand it strikes in a rapid descent down to where, in St. Benedict's day, five hundred feet below, lay the blue waters of the lake. The cave has a large triangular-shaped opening and is about ten feet deep. On his way from Enfide, Benedict met a monk, Romanus, whose monastery was on the mountain above the cliff overhanging the cave. Romanus had discussed with Benedict the purpose which had brought him to Subiaco, and had given him the monk's habit. By his advice Benedict became a hermit and for three years, unknown to men, lived in this cave above the lake. St. Gregory tells us little of these years, He now speaks of Benedict no longer as a youth (*puer*), but as a man (*vir*) of God. Romanus, he twice tells us, served the saint in every way he could. The monk apparently visited him frequently, and on fixed days brought him food.

During these three years of solitude, broken only by occasional communications with the outer world and by the visits of Romanus, he matured both in mind and character, in knowledge of himself and of his fellow-man, and at the same time he became not merely known to, but secured the respect of, those about him; so much so that on the death of the abbot of a monastery in the neighbourhood (identified by some with Vicovaro), the community came to him and begged him to become its abbot. Benedict was acquainted with the life and discipline of the monastery, and knew that "their manners were diverse from his and therefore that they would never agree together: yet, at length, overcome with their entreaty, he gave his consent" (*ibid.*, 3). The experiment failed; the monks tried to poison him, and he returned to his cave. From this time his miracles seen to have become frequent, and many people, attracted by his sanctity and character, came to Subiaco to be under his guidance. For them he built in the valley twelve monasteries, in each of which he placed a superior with twelve monks. In a thirteenth he lived with "a few, such as he thought would more profit and be better instructed by his own presence" (*ibid.*, 3). He remained, however, the father or abbot of all. With the establishment of these monasteries began the schools for children; and amongst the first to be brought were Maurus and Placid.

The remainder of St. Benedict's life was spent in realizing the ideal of monasticism which he has left us drawn out in his Rule, and before we follow the slight chronological story given by St. Gregory, it will be better to examine the ideal, which, as St. Gregory says, is St. Benedict's real biography (*ibid.*, 36). We will deal here with the Rule only so far as it is an element in St. Benedict's life. For the relations which it bore to the monasticism of previous centuries, and for its influence throughout the West on civil and religious government, and upon the spiritual life of Christians, the reader is referred to the articles monasticism and benedict, saint, rule of.

The Benedictine Rule.

1. Before studying St. Benedict's Rule it is necessary to point out that it is written for **laymen**, not for clerics. The saint's purpose was not to institute an order of clerics with clerical duties and offices, but an organization and a set of rules for the domestic life of such laymen as wished to live as fully as possible the type of life presented in the Gospel. "My words," he says,

“are addressed to thee, whoever thou art, that, renouncing thine own will, dost put on the strong and bright armour of obedience in order to fight for the Lord Christ, our true King.” (Prol. to Rule.) Later, the Church imposed the clerical state upon Benedictines, and with the state came a preponderance of clerical and sacerdotal duties, but the impress of the lay origin of the Benedictines has remained, and is perhaps the source of some of the characteristics which mark them off from later orders.

2. Another characteristic feature of the saint's Rule is its view of **work**. His so-called order was not established to carry on any particular work or to meet any special crisis in the Church, as has been the case with other orders. With Benedict the work of his monks was only a means to goodness of life. The great disciplinary force for human nature is work; idleness is its ruin. The purpose of his Rule was to bring men “back to God by the labour of obedience, from whom they had departed by the idleness of disobedience.” Work was the first condition of all growth in goodness. It was in order that his own life might be “wearied with labours for God's sake” that St. Benedict left Enfide for the cave at Subiaco. It is necessary, comments St. Gregory, that God's elect should at the beginning, when life and temptations are strong are strong in them, “be wearied with labour and pains.” In the regeneration of human nature in the order of discipline, even prayer comes after work, for grace meets with no co-operation in the soul and heart of an idler. When the Goth “gave over the world” and went to Subiaco, St. Benedict gave him a bill-hook and set him to clear away briars for the making of a garden. “*Ecce! labora!*” go and work. Work is not, as the civilization of the time taught, the condition peculiar to slaves; it is the universal lot of man, necessary for his well-being as a man, and essential for him as a Christian.

3. The religious life, as conceived by St. Benedict is essentially **social**. Life apart from one's fellows, the life of a hermit, if it is to be wholesome and sane, is possible only for a few, and these few must have reached an advanced stage of self-discipline while living with others (Rule, 1). The Rule, therefore, is entirely occupied with regulating the **life of a community** of men who live and work and pray and eat together, and this is not merely for a course of training, but as a permanent element of life at its best. The Rule conceives the superiors as always present and in constant touch with every member of the government, which is best described as patriarchal, or paternal (ibid., 2, 3, 64). The superior is the head of a family; all are the permanent members of a household. Hence, too, much of the spiritual teaching of the Rule is concealed under legislation which seems purely social and domestic organization (ibid. 22-23, 35-41). So intimately connected with domestic life is the whole framework and teaching of the Rule that a Benedictine may be more truly said to enter or join a particular household than to join an order. The social character of Benedictine life has found expression in a fixed type for monasteries and in the kind of works which Benedictines undertake, and it is secured by an absolute communism in possessions (ibid. 33, 34, 54, 55), by the rigorous suppression of all differences of worldly rank - “no one of noble birth may [for that reason] be put before him that was formerly a slave” (ibid. 2). and by the enforced presence of everyone at the routine duties of the household.

4. Although private **ownership** is most strictly forbidden by the Rule, it was no part of St. Benedict's conception of monastic life that his monks, as a body, should strip themselves of all wealth and live upon the alms of the charitable; rather his purpose was to restrict the requirements of the individual to what was necessary and simple, and to secure that the use and administration of the corporate possessions should be in strict accord with the teaching of the Gospel. The Benedictine ideal of poverty is quite different from the Franciscan. The Benedictine takes no explicit vow of poverty; he only vows obedience according to the Rule. The rule allows all that is necessary to each individual, together with sufficient and varied clothing, abundant food (exclud-

ing only the flesh of quadrupeds), wine and ample sleep (ibid., 39, 40, 41, 55). Possessions could be held in common, they might be large, but they were to be administered for the furtherance of the work of the community and for the benefit of others. While the individual monk was poor, the monastery was to be in a position to give alms, not to be compelled to seek them. It was to relieve the poor, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick, to bury the dead, to help the afflicted (ibid., 4), to entertain all strangers (ibid., 3). The poor came to Benedict to get help to pay their debts (Dial. St. Greg., 27); they came for food (ibid., 21, 28).

5. St. Benedict originated a form of **government** which is deserving of study. It is contained in chapters 2, 3, 31, 64, 65 of the Rule and in certain pregnant phrases scattered through other chapters. As with the Rule itself, so also his scheme of government is intended not for an order but for a single community. He presupposes that the community have bound themselves, by their promise of stability, to spend their lives together under the Rule. The superior is then elected by a free and universal suffrage. The government may be described as a monarchy, with the Rule as its constitution. Within the four corners of the Rule everything is left to the discretion of the abbot, the abuse of whose authority is checked by religion (Rule, 2), by open debate with the community on all important matters, and with its representative elders in smaller concerns (ibid., 3). The reality of these checks upon the wilfulness of the ruler can be appreciated only when it is remembered that ruler and community were bound together for life, that all were inspired by the single purpose of carrying out the conception of life taught in the Gospel, and that the relation of the members of the community to one another and to the abbot, and of the abbot to them, were elevated and spiritualized by a mysticism which set before itself the acceptance of the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount as real and work-a-day truths.

6. (a) When a Christian household, a community, has been organized by the willing acceptance of its social duties and responsibilities, by obedience to an authority, and, further, is under the continuous discipline of work and self-denial, the next step in the regeneration of its members in their return to God is prayer. The Rule deals directly and explicitly only with **public prayer**. For this Benedict assigns the Psalms and Canticles, with readings from the Scriptures and Fathers. He devotes eleven chapters out of the seventy-three of his Rule to regulating this public prayer, and it is characteristic of the freedom of his Rule and of the “moderation” of the saint, that he concludes his very careful directions by saying that if any superior does not like his arrangement he is free to make another; this only he says he will insist on, that the whole Psalter will be said in the course of a week. The practice of the holy Fathers, he adds, was resolutely “to say in a single day what I pray we tepid monks may get through in a whole week” (ibid., 18). On the other hand, he checks indiscreet zeal by laying down the general rule “that prayer made in common must always be short” (ibid., 20). It is very difficult to reduce St. Benedict's teaching on prayer to a system, for this reason, that in his conception of the Christian character, prayer is co-existent with the whole life, and life is not complete at any point unless penetrated by prayer. .

(b) The form of prayer which thus covers the whole of our waking hours, St. Benedict calls the first degree of humility. It consists in realizing the presence of God (ibid., 7). The first step begins when the spiritual is joined to the merely human, or, as the saint expresses it, it is the first step in a ladder, the rungs of which rest at one end in the body and at the other in the soul. The ability to exercise this form of prayer is fostered by that care of the “heart” on which the saint so often insists; and the heart is saved from the dissipation that would result from social intercourse by the habit of mind which sees in everyone Christ Himself. “Let the sick be served in very deed as Christ Himself” (ibid., 36). “Let all guests that come be received as Christ” (ibid.,

53). “Whether we be slaves or freemen, we are all one in Christ and bear an equal rank in the service of Our Lord” (ibid., 2).

(c) Secondly, there is public prayer. This is short and is to be said at intervals, at night and at seven distinct hours during the day, so that, when possible, there shall be no great interval without a call to formal, vocal, prayer (ibid., 16). The position which St. Benedict gave to public, common prayer can best be described by saying that he established it as the centre of the common life to which he bound his monks. It was the consecration, not only of the individual, but of the whole community to God by the oft-repeated daily public acts of faith. and of praise and adoration of the Creator; and this public worship of God, the *opus Dei*, was to form the chief work of his monks, and to be the source from which all other works took their inspiration, their direction, and their strength.

(d) Lastly, there is private prayer, for which the saint does not legislate. It follows individual gifts - “If anyone wishes to pray in private, let him go quietly into the oratory and pray, not with a loud voice, but with tears and fervour of heart” (ibid., 52). “Our prayer ought to be short and with purity of heart, except it be perchance prolonged by the inspiration of divine grace” (ibid., 20). But if St. Benedict gives no further directions on private prayer, it is because the whole condition and mode of life secured by the Rule, and the character formed by its observance, lead naturally to the higher states of prayer. As the Saint writes: “Whoever, therefore, thou art that hastenest to thy heavenly country, fulfil by the help of Christ this little Rule which we have written for beginners; and then at length thou shalt arrive, under God's protection, at the lofty summits of doctrine and virtue of which we have spoken above” (ibid., 73). for guidance in these higher states the Saint refers to the Fathers, Basil and Cassian.

From this short examination of the Rule and its system of prayer, it will be obvious that to describe the Benedictine as a contemplative order is misleading, if the word is used in its modern technical sense as excluding active work; the “contemplative” is a form of life framed for different circumstances and with a different object from St. Benedict's. The Rule, including its system of prayer and public psalmody, is meant for every class of mind and every degree of learning. It is framed not only for the educated and for souls advanced in perfection, but it organizes and directs a complete life which is adapted for simple folk and for sinners, for the observance of the Commandments and for the beginnings of goodness. “We have written this Rule,” writes St. Benedict, “that by observing it in monasteries, we may shew ourselves to have some degree of goodness in life and a beginning of holiness. But for him who would hasten to the perfection of religion, there are the teachings of the holy Fathers, the following whereof bringeth a man to the height of perfection” (ibid., 73). Before leaving the subject of prayer it will be well to point out again that by ordering the public recitation and singing of the Psalter, St. Benedict was not putting upon his monks a distinctly clerical obligation. The Psalter was the common form of prayer of all Christians; we must not read into his Rule characteristics which a later age and discipline have made inseparable from the public recitation of the Divine Office.

We can now take up again the story of Benedict's life. How long he remained at Subiaco we do not know. Abbot Tosti conjectures it was until the year 529. Of these years St. Gregory is content to tell no more than a few stories descriptive of the life of the monks, and of the character and government of St. Benedict. The latter was making his first attempt to realize in these twelve monasteries his conception of the monastic life. We can fill in many of the details from the Rule. By his own experiment and his knowledge of the history of monasticism the saint had learnt that

the regeneration of the individual, except in abnormal cases, is not reached by the path of solitude, nor by that of austerity, but by the beaten path of man's social instinct, with its necessary conditions of obedience and work; and that neither the body nor the mind can be safely overstrained in the effort to avoid evil (*ibid.*, 64). Thus, at Subiaco we find no solitaries, no conventual hermits, no great austerities, but men living together in organized communities for the purpose of leading good lives, doing such work as came to their hand - carrying water up the steep mountain-side, doing the other household work, raising the twelve cloisters, clearing the ground, making gardens, teaching children, preaching to the country people, reading and studying at least four hours a day, receiving strangers, accepting and training new-comers, attending the regular hours of prayer, reciting and chanting the Psalter. The life at Subiaco and the character of St. Benedict attracted many to the new monasteries, and their increasing numbers and growing influence came the inevitable jealousy and persecution, which culminated with a vile attempt of a neighboring priest to scandalize the monks by an exhibition of naked women, dancing in the courtyard of the saint's monastery (*Dial. St. Greg.*, 8). To save his followers from further persecution Benedict left Subiaco and went to Monte Cassino.

Upon the crest of Monte Cassino "there was an ancient chapel in which the foolish and simple country people, according to the custom of the old Gentiles, worshipped the god Apollo. Round about it likewise upon all sides there were woods for the service of devils, in which, even to that very time, the mad multitude of infidels did offer most wicked sacrifice. The man of God, coming hither, feat in pieces the idol, overthrew the altar, set fire on the woods and in the temple of Apollo built the oratory of St. Martin: and where the altar of the same Apollo was, he made an oratory of St. John: and by his continual preaching he brought the people dwelling in those parts to embrace the faith of Christ" (*ibid.*, 8). On this spot the saint built his monastery. His experience at Subiaco had led him to alter his plans, and now, instead of building several houses with a small community in each, he kept all his monks in one monastery and provided for its government by appointing a prior and deans (*Rule*, 65, 21). We find no trace in his Rule, which was most probably written at Monte Cassino, of the view which guided him when he built the twelve small monasteries at Subiaco. The life which we have witnessed at Subiaco was renewed at Subiaco was renewed at Monte Cassino, but the change in the situation and local conditions brought a corresponding modification in the work undertaken by the monks. Subiaco was a retired valley away in the mountains and difficult of access; Cassino was on one of the great highways to the south of Italy, and at no great distance from Capua. This brought the monastery into more frequent communication with the outside world. It soon became a centre of influence in a district in which there was a large population, with several dioceses and other monasteries. Abbots came to see and advise with Benedict. Men of all classes were frequent visitors, and he numbered nobles and bishops among his intimate friends. There were nuns in the neighbourhood whom the monks went to preach to and to teach. There was a village nearby in which St. Benedict preached and made many converts (*Dial. St. Greg.*, 19). The monastery became the protector of the poor, their trustee (*ibid.*, 31). their refuge in sickness, in trial, in accidents, in want.

Thus during the life of the saint we find what has ever since remained a characteristic feature of Benedictine houses, i.e. the members take up any work which is adapted to their peculiar circumstances, any work which may be dictated by their necessities. Thus we find the Benedictines teaching in poor schools and in the universities, practising the arts and following agriculture, undertaking the care of souls, or devoting themselves wholly to study. No work is foreign to the Benedictine, provided only it is compatible with living in community and with the performance of the Divine Office. This freedom in the choice of work was necessary in a Rule which

was to be suited to all times and places, but it was primarily the natural result of the which St. Benedict had in view, and which he differs from the founders of later orders. These later had in view some special work to which they wished their disciples to devote themselves; St. Benedict's purpose was only to provide a Rule by which anyone might follow the Gospel counsels, and live, and work and pray, and save his soul. St. Gregory's narrative of the establishment of Monte Cassino does little more for us than to supply disconnected incidents which illustrate the daily life of the monastery. We gain only a few biographical facts. From Monte Cassino St. Benedict founded another monastery near Terracina, on the coast, about forty miles distant (ibid., 22). To the wisdom of long experience and to the mature virtues of the saint, was now added the gift of prophecy, of which St. Gregory gives many examples. Celebrated among these is the story of the visit of Totila, King of the Goths, in the year 543, when the saint "rebuked him for his wicked deeds, and in a few words told him all that should befall him, saying 'Much wickedness do you daily commit, and many sins have you done: now at length give over your sinful life. Into the city of Rome shall you enter, and over the sea shall you pass: nine years shall you reign, and in the tenth shall you leave this mortal life.' The king, hearing these things, was wonderfully afraid, and desiring the holy man to commend him to God in his prayers he departed: and from that time forward he was nothing so cruel as before he had been. Not long after he went to Rome, sailed over into Sicily, and in the tenth year of his reign he lost his kingdom together with his life." (ibid., 15).

Totila's visit to Monte Cassino in 543 is the only certain date we have in the saint's life. It must have occurred when Benedict was advanced in age. Abbot Tosti, following others, puts the saint's death in the same year. Just before his death we hear for the first time of his sister Scholastica. "She had been dedicated from her infancy to Our Lord, and used to come once a year to visit her brother. To whom the man of God went not far from the gate to a place that did belong to the abbey, there to give her entertainment" (ibid., 33). They met for the last time three days before Scholastica's death, on a day "when the sky was so clear that no cloud was to be seen." The sister begged her brother to stay the night, "but by no persuasion would he agree unto that, saying that he might not by any means tarry all night out of his abbey.... The nun receiving this denial of her brother, joining her hands together, laid them on the table; and so bowing her head upon them, she made her prayers to Almighty God, and lifting her head from the table, there fell suddenly such a tempest of lightening and thundering, and such abundance of rain, that neither venerable Bennet, nor the monks that were with him, could put their head out of door" (ibid., 33). Three days later, "Benedict beheld the soul of his sister, which was departed from her body, in the likeness of a dove, to ascend into heaven: who rejoicing much to see her great glory, with hymns and lauds gave thanks to Almighty God, and did impart news of this her death to his monks whom also he sent presently to bring her corpse to his abbey, to have it buried in that grave which he had provided for himself" (ibid., 34).

It would seem to have been about this time that St. Benedict had that wonderful vision in which he came as near to seeing God as is possible for man in this life. St. Gregory and St. Bonaventure say that Benedict saw God and in that vision of God saw the whole world. St. Thomas will not allow that this could have been. Urban VIII, however, does not hesitate to say that "the saint merited while still in this mortal life, to see God Himself and in God all that is below him." If he did not see the Creator, he saw the light which is in the Creator, and in that light, as St. Gregory says, "saw the whole world gathered together as it were under on beam of the sun. At the same time he saw the soul of Germanus, Bishop of Capua, in a fiery globe carried up by the angels to Heaven" (ibid., 35). Once more the hidden things of God were shown to him, and

he warned his brethren, both “those that lived daily with him and those that dwelt far off” of his approaching death. “Six days before he left this world he gave orders to have his sepulchre opened, and forthwith falling into an ague, he began with burning heat to wax faint; and when as the sickness daily increased, upon the sixth day he commanded his monks to carry him into the oratory, where he did arm himself receiving the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ; and having his weak body holden up betwixt the hands of his disciples, he stood with his own hands lifted up to heaven; and as he was in that manner praying, he gave up the ghost” (ibid., 37). He was buried in the same grave with his sister “in the oratory of St. John the Baptist, which [he] himself had built when he overthrew the altar of Apollo” (ibid.). There is some doubt whether the relics of the saint are still at Monte Cassino, or whether they were moved in the seventh century to Fleury. Abbot Tosti in his life of St. Benedict, discusses the question at length (chap. xi) and decides the controversy in favour of Monte Cassino.

Perhaps the most striking characteristics in St. Benedict are his deep and wide human feeling and his moderation. The former reveals itself in the many anecdotes recorded by St. Gregory. We see it in his sympathy and care for the simplest of his monks; his hastening to the help of the poor Goth who had lost his bill-hook; spending the hours of the night in prayer on the mountain to save his monks the labour of carrying water, and to remove from their lives a “just cause of grumbling”; staying three days in a monastery to help to induce one of the monks to “remain quietly at his prayers as the other monks did,” instead of going forth from the chapel and wandering about “busying himself worldly and transitory things.” He lets the crow from the neighboring woods come daily when all are at dinner to be fed by himself. His mind is always with those who are absent; sitting in his cell he knows that Placid is fallen into the lake; he foresees the accident to the builders and sends a warning to them; in spirit and some kind of real presence he is with the monks “eating and refreshing themselves” on their journey, with his friend Valentinian on his way to the monastery, with the monk taking a present from the nuns, with the new community in Terracina. Throughout St. Gregory's narrative he is always the same quiet, gentle, dignified, strong, peace-loving man who by the subtle power of sympathy becomes the centre of the lives and interests of all about him. We see him with his monks in the church, at their reading, sometimes in the fields, but more commonly in his cell, where frequent messengers find him “weeping silently in his prayers,” and in the night hours standing at “the window of his cell in the tower, offering up his prayers to God”; and often, as Totila found him, sitting outside the door of his cell, or “before the gate of the monastery reading a book.” He has given his own portrait in his ideal picture of an abbot (Rule, 64):

It beseemeth the abbot to be ever doing some good for his brethren rather than to be presiding over them. He must, therefore, be learned in the law of God, that he may know whence to bring forth things new and old; he must be chaste, sober, and merciful, ever preferring mercy to justice, that he himself may obtain mercy. Let him hate sin and love the brethren. And even in his corrections, let him act with prudence, and not go too far, lest while he seeketh too eagerly to scrape off the rust, the vessel be broken. Let him keep his own frailty ever before his eyes, and remember that the bruised reed must not be broken. And by this we do not mean that he should suffer vices to grow up; but that prudently and with charity he should cut them off, in the way he shall see best for each, as we have already said; and let him study rather to be loved than feared. Let him not be violent nor over anxious, not exacting nor obstinate, not jealous nor prone to suspicion, or else he will never be at rest. In all his commands, whether spiritual or temporal, let him be prudent and considerate. In the works which he imposeth let him be discreet and moderate, bearing in mind the discretion of holy Jacob, when he said: 'If I cause my flocks to be over-



driven, they will all perish in one day'. Taking, then, such testimonies as are borne by these and the like words to discretion, the mother of virtues, let him so temper all things, that the strong may have something to strive after, and the weak nothing at which to take alarm.

Prologue.

Listen carefully, my child,
to your master's precepts,
and incline the ear of your heart (Prov. 4:20).
Receive willingly and carry out effectively
your loving father's advice,
that by the labor of obedience
you may return to Him
from whom you had departed by the sloth of disobedience.
To you, therefore, my words are now addressed,
whoever you may be,
who are renouncing your own will
to do battle under the Lord Christ, the true King,
and are taking up the strong, bright weapons of obedience.
And first of all,
whatever good work you begin to do,
beg of Him with most earnest prayer to perfect it,
that He who has now deigned to count us among His children
may not at any time be grieved by our evil deeds.
For we must always so serve Him
with the good things He has given us,
that He will never as an angry Father disinherit His children,
nor ever as a dread Lord, provoked by our evil actions,
deliver us to everlasting punishment
as wicked servants who would not follow Him to glory.
Let us arise, then, at last,
for the Scripture stirs us up, saying,
"Now is the hour for us to rise from sleep" (Rom. 13:11).
Let us open our eyes to the deifying light,
let us hear with attentive ears
the warning which the divine voice cries daily to us,
"Today if you hear His voice,
harden not your hearts" (Ps. 94:8).
And again,
"Whoever has ears to hear,
hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Matt. 11-15; Apoc. 2:7).
And what does He say?
"Come, My children, listen to Me;
I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Ps. 33:12).
"Run while you have the light of life,

lest the darkness of death overtake you” (John 12:35).
And the Lord, seeking his laborer
in the multitude to whom He thus cries out,
says again,
“Who is the one who will have life,
and desires to see good days” (Ps. 33:13)?
And if, hearing Him, you answer,
“I am the one,”
God says to you,
“If you will have true and everlasting life,
keep your tongue from evil
and your lips that they speak no guile.
Turn away from evil and do good;
seek after peace and pursue it” (Ps. 33:14-15).
And when you have done these things,
My eyes shall be upon you
and My ears open to your prayers;
and before you call upon Me,
I will say to you,
‘Behold, here I am’” (Ps. 33:16; Is. 65:24; 58:9).
What can be sweeter to us, dear ones,
than this voice of the Lord inviting us?
Behold, in His loving kindness
the Lord shows us the way of life.
Having our loins girded, therefore,
with faith and the performance of good works (Eph. 6:14),
let us walk in His paths
by the guidance of the Gospel,
that we may deserve to see Him
who has called us to His kingdom (1 Thess. 2:12).
For if we wish to dwell in the tent of that kingdom,
we must run to it by good deeds
or we shall never reach it.
But let us ask the Lord, with the Prophet,
“Lord, who shall dwell in Your tent,
or who shall rest upon Your holy mountain” (Ps. 14:1)?
After this question, brothers and sisters,
let us listen to the Lord
as He answers and shows us the way to that tent, saying,
“The one Who walks without stain and practices justice;
who speaks truth from his heart;
who has not used his tongue for deceit;
who has done no evil to his neighbor;
who has given no place to slander against his neighbor.”
This is the one who,
under any temptation from the malicious devil,

has brought him to naught (Ps. 14:4)
by casting him and his temptation from the sight of his heart;
and who has laid hold of his thoughts
while they were still young
and dashed them against Christ (Ps. 136:9).
It is they who,
fearing the Lord (Ps. 14:4),
do not pride themselves on their good observance;
but,
convinced that the good which is in them
cannot come from themselves and must be from the Lord,
glorify the Lord's work in them (Ps. 14:4),
using the words of the Prophet,
“Not to us, O Lord, not to us,
but to Your name give the glory” (Ps. 113, 2nd part:1).
Thus also the Apostle Paul
attributed nothing of the success of his preaching to himself,
but said,
“By the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15:10).
And again he says,
“He who glories, let him glory in the Lord” (2 Cor. 10:17).
Hence the Lord says in the Gospel,
“Whoever listens to these words of Mine and acts upon them,
I will liken to a wise person
who built a house on rock.
The floods came,
the winds blew and beat against that house,
and it did not fall,
because it had been founded on rock” (Matt. 7:24-25).
Having given us these assurances,
the Lord is waiting every day
for us to respond by our deeds to His holy admonitions.
And the days of this life are lengthened
and a truce granted us for this very reason,
that we may amend our evil ways.
As the Apostle says,
“Do you not know that God's patience is inviting you to repent” (Rom. 2:4)?
For the merciful Lord tells us,
“I desire not the death of the sinner,
but that the sinner should be converted and live” (Ezech. 33:11).
So, brothers and sisters, we have asked the Lord
who is to dwell in His tent,
and we have heard His commands
to anyone who would dwell there;
it remains for us to fulfill those duties.
Therefore we must prepare our hearts and our bodies

to do battle under the holy obedience of His commands;
and let us ask God
that He be pleased to give us the help of His grace
for anything which our nature finds hardly possible.
And if we want to escape the pains of hell
and attain life everlasting,
then, while there is still time,
while we are still in the body
and are able to fulfil all these things
by the light of this life,
we must hasten to do now
what will profit us for eternity.
And so we are going to establish
a school for the service of the Lord.
In founding it we hope to introduce nothing harsh or burdensome.
But if a certain strictness results from the dictates of equity
for the amendment of vices or the preservation of charity,
do not be at once dismayed and fly from the way of salvation,
whose entrance cannot but be narrow (Matt. 7:14).
For as we advance in the religious life and in faith,
our hearts expand
and we run the way of God's commandments
with unspeakable sweetness of love (Ps. 118:32).
Thus, never departing from His school,
but persevering in the monastery according to His teaching
until death,
we may by patience share in the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 4:13)
and deserve to have a share also in His kingdom.

1: On the four Kinds of Monks.

It is well known that there are four kinds of monks.
The first kind are the Cenobites:
those who live in monasteries
and serve under a rule and an Abbot.
The second kind are the Anchorites or Hermits:
those who,
no longer in the first fervor of their reformation,
but after long probation in a monastery,
having learned by the help of many brethren
how to fight against the devil,
go out well armed from the ranks of the community
to the solitary combat of the desert.
They are able now,
with no help save from God,
to fight single-handed against the vices of the flesh

and their own evil thoughts.

The third kind of monks, a detestable kind, are the Sarabaites.

These, not having been tested,

as gold in the furnace (Wis. 3:6),

by any rule or by the lessons of experience,

are as soft as lead.

In their works they still keep faith with the world,

so that their tonsure marks them as liars before God.

They live in twos or threes, or even singly,

without a shepherd,

in their own sheepfolds and not in the Lord's.

Their law is the desire for self-gratification:

whatever enters their mind or appeals to them,

that they call holy;

what they dislike, they regard as unlawful.

The fourth kind of monks are those called Gyrovagues.

These spend their whole lives tramping from province to province,

staying as guests in different monasteries

for three or four days at a time.

Always on the move, with no stability,

they indulge their own wills

and succumb to the allurements of gluttony,

and are in every way worse than the Sarabaites.

Of the miserable conduct of all such

it is better to be silent than to speak.

Passing these over, therefore,

let us proceed, with God's help,

to lay down a rule for the strongest kind of monks, the Cenobites.

2: The Abbess.

An Abbess who is worthy to be over a monastery

should always remember what she is called,

and live up to the name of Superior.

For she is believed to hold the place of Christ in the monastery,

being called by a name of His,

which is taken from the words of the Apostle:

“You have received a Spirit of adoption ...,

by virtue of which we cry, 'Abba — Father'“ (Rom. 8:15)!

Therefore the Abbess ought not to teach or ordain or command

anything which is against the Lord's precepts;

on the contrary,

her commands and her teaching

should be a leaven of divine justice

kneaded into the minds of her disciples.

Let the Abbess always bear in mind

that at the dread Judgment of God

there will be an examination of these two matters:
her teaching and the obedience of her disciples.
And let the Abbess be sure
that any lack of profit
the master of the house may find in the sheep
will be laid to the blame of the shepherd.
On the other hand,
if the shepherd has bestowed all her pastoral diligence
on a restless, unruly flock
and tried every remedy for their unhealthy behavior,
then she will be acquitted at the Lord's Judgment
and may say to the Lord with the Prophet:
"I have not concealed Your justice within my heart;
Your truth and Your salvation I have declared" (Ps. 39:11).
"But they have despised and rejected me" (Is. 1:2; Ezech. 20:27).
And then finally let death itself, irresistible,
punish those disobedient sheep under her charge.
Therefore, when anyone receives the name of Abbess,
she ought to govern her disciples with a twofold teaching.
That is to say,
she should show them all that is good and holy
by her deeds even more than by her words,
expounding the Lord's commandments in words
to the intelligent among her disciples,
but demonstrating the divine precepts by her actions
for those of harder hearts and ruder minds.
And whatever she has taught her disciples
to be contrary to God's law,
let her indicate by her example that it is not to be done,
lest, while preaching to others, she herself be found reprobate (1 Cor. 9:27),
and lest God one day say to her in her sin,
"Why do you declare My statutes
and profess My covenant with your lips,
whereas you hate discipline
and have cast My words behind you" (Ps. 49:16-17)?
And again,
"You were looking at the speck in your brother's eye,
and did not see the beam in your own" (Matt. 7:3).
Let her make no distinction of persons in the monastery.
Let her not love one more than another,
unless it be one whom she finds better
in good works or in obedience.
Let her not advance one of noble birth
ahead of one who was formerly a slave,
unless there be some other reasonable ground for it.
But if the Abbess for just reason think fit to do so,

let her advance one of any rank whatever.
Otherwise let them keep their due places;
because, whether slaves or free, we are all one in Christ (Gal. 3:28)
and bear in equal burden of service
in the army of the same Lord.
For with God there is no respect of persons (Rom. 2:11).
Only for one reason are we preferred in His sight:
if we be found better than others in good works and humility.
Therefore let the Abbess show equal love to all
and impose the same discipline on all
according to their deserts.
In her teaching
the Abbess should always follow the Apostle's formula:
"Reprove, entreat, rebuke" (2 Tim. 4:2);
threatening at one time and coaxing at another
as the occasion may require,
showing now the stern countenance of a mistress,
now the loving affection of a mother.
That is to say,
it is the undisciplined and restless
whom she must reprove rather sharply;
it is the obedient, meek and patient
whom she must entreat to advance in virtue;
while as for the negligent and disdainful,
these we charge her to rebuke and correct.
And let her not shut her eyes to the faults of offenders;
but, since she has the authority,
let her cut out those faults by the roots
as soon as they begin to appear,
remembering the fate of Heli, the priest of Silo (1 Kings 2-4).
The well-disposed and those of good understanding
let her correct with verbal admonition the first and second time.
But bold, hard, proud and disobedient characters
she should curb at the very beginning of their ill-doing
by stripes and other bodily punishments,
knowing that it is written,
"the fool is not corrected with words" (Prov. 18:2; 29:19),
and again,
"Beat your son with the rod,
and you will deliver his soul from death" (Prov. 23:13-14).
The Abbess should always remember what she is
and what she is called,
and should know that to whom more is committed,
from her more is required (Luke 12:48).
Let her understand also
what a difficult and arduous task she has undertaken:

ruling souls and adapting herself to a variety of characters.
One she must coax, another scold, another persuade,
according to each one's character and understanding.
Thus she must adjust and adapt herself to all
in such a way that she may not only suffer no loss
in the flock committed to her care,
but may even rejoice in the increase of a good flock.
Above all let her not neglect or undervalue
the welfare of the souls committed to her,
in a greater concern for fleeting, earthly, perishable things;
but let her always bear in mind
that she has undertaken the government of souls
and that she will have to give an account of them.
And if she be tempted to allege a lack of earthly means,
let her remember what is written:
“First seek the kingdom of God and His justice,
and all these things shall be given you besides” (Ps. 33:10).
And again:
“Nothing is wanting to those who fear Him.”
Let her know, then,
that she who has undertaken the government of souls
must prepare herself to render an account of them.
Whatever number of sisters she knows she has under her care,
she may be sure beyond doubt that on Judgment Day
she will have to give the Lord an account of all these souls,
as well as of her own soul.
Thus the constant apprehension
about her coming examination as shepherd (Ezech. 34)
concerning the sheep entrusted to her,
and her anxiety over the account that must be given for others,
make her careful of her own record.
And while by her admonitions she is helping others to amend,
she herself is cleansed of her faults.

3: Brethren's Counsel.

Whenever any important business has to be done
in the monastery,
let the Abbot call together the whole community
and state the matter to be acted upon.
Then, having heard the brethren's advice,
let him turn the matter over in his own mind
and do what he shall judge to be most expedient.
The reason we have said that all should be called for counsel
is that the Lord often reveals to the younger what is best.
Let the brethren give their advice
with all the deference required by humility,

and not presume stubbornly to defend their opinions;
but let the decision rather depend on the Abbot's judgment,
and all submit to whatever he shall decide for their welfare.
However, just as it is proper
for the disciples to obey their master,
so also it is his function
to dispose all things with prudence and justice.
In all things, therefore, let all follow the Rule as guide,
and let no one be so rash as to deviate from it.
Let no one in the monastery follow his own heart's fancy;
and let no one presume to contend with his Abbot
in an insolent way or even outside of the monastery.
But if anyone should presume to do so,
let him undergo the discipline of the Rule.
At the same time,
the Abbot himself should do all things in the fear of God
and in observance of the Rule,
knowing that beyond a doubt
he will have to render an account of all his decisions
to God, the most just Judge.
But if the business to be done in the interests of the monastery
be of lesser importance,
let him take counsel with the seniors only.
It is written,
“Do everything with counsel,
and you will not repent when you have done it” (Eccles. 32:24).

Main Virtues.

4: The Instruments of Good Works.

1. In the first place, to love the Lord God with the whole heart, the whole soul, the whole strength.
2. Then, one's neighbor as oneself.
3. Then not to murder.
4. Not to commit adultery.
5. Not to steal.
6. Not to covet.
7. Not to bear false witness.
8. To honor all (1 Peter 2:17).
9. And not to do to another what one would not have done to oneself.
10. To deny oneself in order to follow Christ.
11. To chastise the body.
12. Not to become attached to pleasures.
13. To love fasting.
14. To relieve the poor.

15. To clothe the naked.
16. To visit the sick.
17. To bury the dead.
18. To help in trouble.
19. To console the sorrowing.
20. To become a stranger to the world's ways.
21. To prefer nothing to the love of Christ.
22. Not to give way to anger.
23. Not to nurse a grudge.
24. Not to entertain deceit in one's heart.
25. Not to give a false peace.
26. Not to forsake charity.
27. Not to swear, for fear of perjuring oneself.
28. To utter truth from heart and mouth.
29. Not to return evil for evil.
30. To do no wrong to anyone, and to bear patiently wrongs done to oneself.
31. To love one's enemies.
32. Not to curse those who curse us, but rather to bless them.
33. To bear persecution for justice's sake.
34. Not to be proud.
35. Not addicted to wine.
36. Not a great eater.
37. Not drowsy.
38. Not lazy.
39. Not a grumbler.
40. Not a detractor.
41. To put one's hope in God.
42. To attribute to God, and not to self, whatever good one sees in oneself.
43. But to recognize always that the evil is one's own doing, and to impute it to oneself.
44. To fear the Day of Judgment.
45. To be in dread of hell.
46. To desire eternal life with all the passion of the spirit.
47. To keep death daily before one's eyes.
48. To keep constant guard over the actions of one's life.
49. To know for certain that God sees one everywhere.
50. When evil thoughts come into one's heart, to dash them against Christ immediately.
51. And to manifest them to one's spiritual mother.
52. To guard one's tongue against evil and depraved speech.
53. Not to love much talking.
54. Not to speak useless words or words that move to laughter.
55. Not to love much or boisterous laughter.
56. To listen willingly to holy reading.
57. To devote oneself frequently to prayer.
58. Daily in one's prayers, with tears and sighs, to confess one's past sins to God, and to amend them for the future.
59. Not to fulfil the desires of the flesh; to hate one's own will.

60. To obey in all things the commands of the Abbess, even though she herself (which God forbid) should act otherwise, mindful of the Lord's precept, "Do what they say, but not what they do."

61. Not to wish to be called holy before one is holy; but first to be holy, that one may be truly so called.

62. To fulfil God's commandments daily in one's deeds.

63. To love chastity.

64. To hate no one.

65. Not to be jealous, not to harbor envy.

66. Not to love contention.

67. To beware of haughtiness.

68. And to respect the seniors.

69. To love the juniors.

70. To pray for one's enemies in the love of Christ.

71. To make peace with one's adversary before the sun sets.

72. And never to despair of God's mercy.

These, then, are the tools of the spiritual craft.

If we employ them unceasingly day and night,

and return them on the Day of Judgment,

our compensation from the Lord

will be that wage He has promised:

"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,

what God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Cor. 2:9).

Now the workshop

in which we shall diligently execute all these tasks

is the enclosure of the monastery

and stability in the community.

5: Obedience.

The first degree of humility is obedience without delay.

This is the virtue of those

who hold nothing dearer to them than Christ;

who, because of the holy service they have professed,

and the fear of hell,

and the glory of life everlasting,

as soon as anything has been ordered by the Superior,

receive it as a divine command

and cannot suffer any delay in executing it.

Of these the Lord says,

"As soon as he heard, he obeyed Me" (Ps. 17:45).

And again to teachers He says,

"He who hears you, hears Me" (Luke 10:16).

Such as these, therefore,

immediately leaving their own affairs

and forsaking their own will,

dropping the work they were engaged on

and leaving it unfinished,
with the ready step of obedience
follow up with their deeds the voice of him who commands.
And so as it were at the same moment
the master's command is given
and the disciple's work is completed,
the two things being speedily accomplished together
in the swiftness of the fear of God
by those who are moved
with the desire of attaining life everlasting.
That desire is their motive for choosing the narrow way,
of which the Lord says,
“Narrow is the way that leads to life” (Matt. 7:14),
so that,
not living according to their own choice
nor obeying their own desires and pleasures
but walking by another's judgment and command,
they dwell in monasteries and desire to have an Abbot over them.
Assuredly such as these are living up to that maxim of the Lord
in which He says,
“I have come not to do My own will,
but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 6:38).
But this very obedience
will be acceptable to God and pleasing to all
only if what is commanded is done
without hesitation, delay, lukewarmness, grumbling, or objection.
For the obedience given to Superiors is given to God,
since He Himself has said,
“He who hears you, hears Me” (Luke 10:16).
And the disciples should offer their obedience with a good will,
for “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7).
For if the disciple obeys with an ill will
and murmurs,
not necessarily with his lips but simply in his heart,
then even though he fulfil the command
yet his work will not be acceptable to God,
who sees that his heart is murmuring.
And, far from gaining a reward for such work as this,
he will incur the punishment due to murmurers,
unless he amend and make satisfaction.

6: Silence.

Let us do what the Prophet says:
“I said, 'I will guard my ways,
that I may not sin with my tongue.
I have set a guard to my mouth.'”

I was mute and was humbled,
and kept silence even from good things” (Ps. 38:2-3).
Here the Prophet shows
that if the spirit of silence ought to lead us at times
to refrain even from good speech,
so much the more ought the punishment for sin
make us avoid evil words.
Therefore, since the spirit of silence is so important,
permission to speak should rarely be granted
even to perfect disciples,
even though it be for good, holy edifying conversation;
for it is written,
“In much speaking you will not escape sin” (Prov. 10:19),
and in another place,
“Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (Prov. 18:21).
For speaking and teaching belong to the mistress;
the disciple's part is to be silent and to listen.
And for that reason
if anything has to be asked of the Superior,
it should be asked
with all the humility and submission inspired by reverence.
But as for coarse jests and idle words
or words that move to laughter,
these we condemn everywhere with a perpetual ban,
and for such conversation
we do not permit a disciple to open her mouth.

7: Humility.

Holy Scripture, brethren, cries out to us, saying,
“Everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled,
and he who humbles himself shall be exalted” (Luke 14:11).
In saying this it shows us
that all exaltation is a kind of pride,
against which the Prophet proves himself to be on guard
when he says,
“Lord, my heart is not exalted,
nor are mine eyes lifted up;
neither have I walked in great matters,
nor in wonders above me.”
But how has he acted?
“Rather have I been of humble mind
than exalting myself;
as a weaned child on its mother's breast,
so You solace my soul” (Ps. 130:1-2).
Hence, brethren,
if we wish to reach the very highest point of humility

and to arrive speedily at that heavenly exaltation
to which ascent is made through the humility of this present life,
we must
by our ascending actions
erect the ladder Jacob saw in his dream,
on which Angels appeared to him descending and ascending.
By that descent and ascent
we must surely understand nothing else than this,
that we descend by self-exaltation and ascend by humility.
And the ladder thus set up is our life in the world,
which the Lord raises up to heaven if our heart is humbled.
For we call our body and soul the sides of the ladder,
and into these sides our divine vocation has inserted
the different steps of humility and discipline we must climb.
The first degree of humility, then,
is that a person keep the fear of God before his eyes
and beware of ever forgetting it.
Let him be ever mindful of all that God has commanded;
let his thoughts constantly recur
to the hell-fire which will burn for their sins
those who despise God,
and to the life everlasting which is prepared
for those who fear Him.
Let him keep himself at every moment from sins and vices,
whether of the mind, the tongue, the hands, the feet,
or the self-will,
and check also the desires of the flesh.
Let a man consider
that God is always looking at him from heaven,
that his actions are everywhere visible to the divine eyes
and are constantly being reported to God by the Angels.
This is what the Prophet shows us
when he represents God as ever present within our thoughts,
in the words "Searcher of minds and hearts is God" (Ps. 7:10)
and again in the words "The Lord knows the thoughts of men" (Ps. 93:11).
Again he says,
"You have read my thoughts from afar" (Ps. 138:3)
and "The thoughts of people will confess to You" (Ps. 75:11).
In order that he may be careful
about his wrongful thoughts, therefore,
let the faithful brother say constantly in his heart,
"Then shall I be spotless before Him,
if I have kept myself from my iniquity" (Ps. 17:24).
As for self-will,
we are forbidden to do our own will
by the Scripture, which says to us,

“Turn away from your own will” (Eccles. 18:30),
and likewise by the prayer in which we ask God
that His will be done in us.
And rightly are we taught not to do our own will
when we take heed to the warning of Scripture:
“There are ways which seem right,
but the ends of them plunge into the depths of hell” (Prov. 16:25);
and also when we tremble at what is said of the careless:
“They are corrupt and have become abominable in their will.”
And as for the desires of the flesh,
let us believe with the Prophet that God is ever present to us,
when he says to the Lord,
“Every desire of mine is before You” (Ps. 37:10).
We must be on our guard, therefore, against evil desires,
for death lies close by the gate of pleasure.
Hence the Scripture gives this command:
“Go not after your concupiscences” (Eccles. 18:30).
So therefore,
since the eyes of the Lord observe the good and the evil (Prov. 15:3)
and the Lord is always looking down from heaven
on the children of earth
“to see if there be anyone who understands and seeks God” (Ps. 13:2),
and since our deeds are daily,
day and night,
reported to the Lord by the Angels assigned to us,
we must constantly beware, brethren,
as the Prophet says in the Psalm,
lest at any time God see us falling into evil ways
and becoming unprofitable (Ps. 13:3);
and lest, having spared us for the present
because in His kindness He awaits our reformation,
He say to us in the future,
“These things you did, and I held My peace” (Ps. 49:21).
The second degree of humility
is that a person love not his own will
nor take pleasure in satisfying his desires,
but model his actions on the saying of the Lord,
“I have come not to do My own will,
but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 6:38).
It is written also,
“Self-will has its punishment,
but constraint wins a crown.”
The third degree of humility is that a person
for love of God
submit himself to his Superior in all obedience,
imitating the Lord, of whom the Apostle says,

“He became obedient even unto death.”

The fourth degree of humility
is that he hold fast to patience with a silent mind
when in this obedience he meets with difficulties
and contradictions
and even any kind of injustice,
enduring all without growing weary or running away.

For the Scripture says,

“The one who perseveres to the end,
is the one who shall be saved” (Matt. 10:22);
and again

“Let your heart take courage, and wait for the Lord” (Ps. 26:14)!

And to show how those who are faithful
ought to endure all things, however contrary, for the Lord,
the Scripture says in the person of the suffering,

“For Your sake we are put to death all the day long;
we are considered as sheep marked for slaughter” (Ps. 43:22; Rom. 8:36).

Then, secure in their hope of a divine recompense,
they go on with joy to declare,

“But in all these trials we conquer,
through Him who has granted us His love” (Rom. 8:37).

Again, in another place the Scripture says,

“You have tested us, O God;

You have tried us a silver is tried, by fire;

You have brought us into a snare;

You have laid afflictions on our back” (Matt. 5:39-41).

And to show that we ought to be under a Superior,
it goes on to say,

“You have set men over our heads” (Ps. 65:12).

Moreover, by their patience
those faithful ones fulfill the Lord's command
in adversities and injuries:

when struck on one cheek, they offer the other;

when deprived of their tunic, they surrender also their cloak;

when forced to go a mile, they go two;

with the Apostle Paul they bear with false brethren (2 Cor. 11:26)

and bless those who curse them (1 Cor. 4:12).

The fifth degree of humility

is that he hide from his Abbot none of the evil thoughts
that enter his heart

or the sins committed in secret,

but that he humbly confess them.

The Scripture urges us to this when it says,

“Reveal your way to the Lord and hope in Him” (Ps. 36:5)

and again,

“Confess to the Lord, for He is good,

for His mercy endures forever” (Ps. 105:1).

And the Prophet likewise says,

“My offense I have made known to You,
and my iniquities I have not covered up.

I said: 'I will declare against myself my iniquities to the Lord;' and 'You forgave the wickedness of my heart'“ (Ps. 31:5).

The sixth degree of humility

is that a monk be content

with the poorest and worst of everything,

and that in every occupation assigned him

he consider himself a bad and worthless workman,

saying with the Prophet,

“I am brought to nothing and I am without understanding;

I have become as a beast of burden before You,

and I am always with You” (Ps:22-23).

The seventh degree of humility

is that he consider himself lower and of less account

than anyone else,

and this not only in verbal protestation

but also with the most heartfelt inner conviction,

humbling himself and saying with the Prophet,

“But I am a worm and no man,

the scorn of men and the outcast of the people” (Ps. 21:7).

“After being exalted, I have been humbled

and covered with confusion” (Pa. 87:16).

And again,

“It is good for me that You have humbled me,

that I may learn Your commandments” (Ps. 118:71).

The eighth degree of humility

is that a monk do nothing except what is commended

by the common Rule of the monastery

and the example of the elders.

The ninth degree of humility

is that a monk restrain his tongue and keep silence,

not speaking until he is questioned.

For the Scripture shows

that “in much speaking there is no escape from sin” (Prov. 10:19)

and that “the talkative man is not stable on the earth” (Ps. 139:12).

The tenth degree of humility

is that he be not ready and quick to laugh,

for it is written,

“The fool lifts up his voice in laughter” (Eccles. 21:23).

The eleventh degree of humility

is that when a monk speaks

he do so gently and without laughter,

humbly and seriously,

in few and sensible words,
and that he be not noisy in his speech.
It is written,
“A wise man is known by the fewness of his words” (Sextus, Enchiridion, 134 or 145).
The twelfth degree of humility
is that a monk not only have humility in his heart
but also by his very appearance make it always manifest
to those who see him.
That is to say that whether he is at the Work of God,
in the oratory, in the monastery, in the garden, on the road,
in the fields or anywhere else,
and whether sitting, walking or standing,
he should always have his head bowed
and his eyes toward the ground.
Feeling the guilt of his sins at every moment,
he should consider himself already present at the dread Judgment
and constantly say in his heart
what the publican in the Gospel said
with his eyes fixed on the earth:
“Lord, I am a sinner and not worthy to lift up my eyes to heaven” (Luke 18:13; Matt. 8:8);
and again with the Prophet:
“I am bowed down and humbled everywhere” (Ps. 37:7,9; 118:107).
Having climbed all these steps of humility, therefore,
the monk will presently come to that perfect love of God
which casts out fear.
And all those precepts
which formerly he had not observed without fear,
he will now begin to keep by reason of that love,
without any effort,
as though naturally and by habit.
No longer will his motive be the fear of hell,
but rather the love of Christ,
good habit
and delight in the virtues
which the Lord will deign to show forth by the Holy Spirit
in His servant now cleansed from vice and sin.

Communal Prayers.

8: The Divine Office During the Night.

In the winter time,
that is from the Calends of November until Easter,
the sisters shall rise
at what is calculated to be the eighth hour of the night,
so that they may sleep somewhat longer than half the night

and rise with their rest completed.
And the time that remains after the Night Office
should be spent in study
by those sisters who need a better knowledge of the Psalter
or the lessons.
From Easter to the aforesaid Calends of November,
the hour of rising should be so arranged that the Morning Office,
which is to be said at daybreak,
will follow the Night Office after a very short interval,
during which they may go out for the necessities of nature.

9: Psalms at the Night Office.

In winter time as defined above,
there is first this verse to be said three times:
“O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth shall declare Your praise.”
To it is added Psalm 3 and the “Glory be to the Father,”
and after that Psalm 94 to be chanted with an antiphon
or even chanted simply.
Let the Ambrosian hymn Te Deum follow next,
and then six Psalms with antiphons.
When these are finished and the verse said,
let the Abbot give a blessing;
then, all being seated on the benches,
let three lessons be read from the book on the lectern
by the brethren in their turns,
and after each lesson let a responsory be chanted.
Two of the responsories are to be said
without a “Glory be to the Father”
but after the third lesson
let the chanter say the “Glory be to the Father,”
and as soon as he begins it let all rise from their seats
out of honor and reverence to the Holy Trinity.
The books to be read at the Night Office
shall be those of divine authorship,
of both the Old and the New Testament,
and also the explanations of them which have been made
by well known and orthodox Catholic Fathers.
After these three lessons with their responsories
let the remaining six Psalms follow,
to be chanted with “Alleluia.”
After these shall follow the lesson from the Apostle,
to be recited by heart,
the verse
and the petition of the litany, that is “Lord, have mercy on us.”
And so let the Night Office come to an end.

10: The Night Office in Summer Time.

From Easter until the Calends of November
let the same number of Psalms be kept as prescribed above;
but no lessons are to be read from the book,
on account of the shortness of the nights.
Instead of those three lessons
let one lesson from the Old Testament be said by heart
and followed by a short responsory.
But all the rest should be done as has been said;
that is to say that never fewer than twelve Psalms
should be said at the Night Office,
not counting Psalm 3 and Psalm 94.

11: The Night Office on Sundays.

On Sunday
the hour of rising for the Night Office should be earlier.
In that Office let the measure already prescribed be kept,
namely the singing of six Psalms and a verse.
Then let all be seated on the benches in their proper order
while the lessons and their responsories are read from the book,
as we said above.
These shall be four in number,
with the chanter saying the “Glory be to the Father”
in the fourth responsory only,
and all rising reverently as soon as he begins it.
After these lessons
let six more Psalms with antiphons follow in order, as before,
and a verse;
and then let four more lessons be read with their responsories
in the same way as the former.
After these let there be three canticles
from the book of the Prophets,
as the Abbot shall appoint,
and let these canticles be chanted with “Alleluia.”
Then when the verse has been said
and the Abbot has given the blessing,
let four more lessons be read,
from the New Testament,
in the manner prescribed above.
After the fourth responsory
let the Abbot begin the hymn “We praise You, O God.”
When this is finished
the Abbot shall read the lesson from the book of the Gospels,
while all stand in reverence and awe.
At the end let all answer “Amen,”

and let the Abbot proceed at once
to the hymn “To You be praise.”
After the blessing has been given,
let them begin the Morning Office.
This order for the Night Office on Sunday
shall be observed the year around,
both summer and winter;
unless it should happen (which God forbid)
that the brethren be late in rising,
in which case the lessons or the responsories
will have to be shortened somewhat.
Let every precaution be taken, however,
against such an occurrence;
but if it does happen,
then the one through whose neglect it has come about
should make due satisfaction to God in the oratory.

12: The Morning Office.

The Morning Office on Sunday shall begin with Psalm 66
recited straight through without an antiphon.
After that let Psalm 50 be said with “Alleluia,”
then Psalms 117 and 62,
the Cantic of Blessing (Benedicite) and the Psalms of praise (Ps. 148-150);
then a lesson from the Apocalypse to be recited by heart,
the responsory, the Ambrosian hymn [Te Deum], the verse,
the cantic from the Gospel book,
the litany and so the end.

13: The Morning Office on Weekdays.

On weekdays
the Morning Office shall be celebrated as follows.
Let Psalm 66 be said without an antiphon
and somewhat slowly,
as on Sunday,
in order that all may be in time for Psalm 50,
which is to be said with an antiphon.
After that let two other Psalms be said according to custom,
namely:
on Monday Psalms 5 and 35,
on Tuesday Psalms 42 and 56,
on Wednesday Psalms 63 and 64,
on Thursday Psalms 87 and 89,
on Friday Psalms 75 and 91,
and on Saturday Psalm 142 and the cantic from Deuteronomy,
which is to be divided into two sections
each terminated by a “Glory be to the Father.”

But on the other days let there be a canticle from the Prophets, each on its own day as chanted by the Roman Church.

Next follow the Psalms of praise [148-50], then a lesson of the Apostle to be recited from memory, the responsory, the Ambrosian hymn [Te Deum], the verse, the canticle from the Gospel book, the litany, and so the end.

The Morning and Evening Offices should never be allowed to pass without the Superior saying the Lord's Prayer in its place at the end so that all may hear it, on account of the thorns of scandal which are apt to spring up. Thus those who hear it, being warned by the covenant which they make in that prayer when they say, "Forgive us as we forgive," may cleanse themselves of faults against that covenant. But at the other Offices let the last part only of that prayer be said aloud, so that all may answer, "But deliver us from evil."

14: The Night Office on the Feasts of the Saints.

On the feasts of Saints and on all festivals let the Office be performed as we have prescribed for Sundays, except that the Psalms, the antiphons and the lessons belonging to that particular day are to be said. Their number, however, shall remain as we have specified above.

15: "Alleluia."

From holy Easter until Pentecost without interruption let "Alleluia" be said both in the Psalms and in the responsories. From Pentecost to the beginning of Lent let it be said every night with the last six Psalms of the Night Office only. On every Sunday, however, outside of Lent, the canticles, the Morning Office, Prime, Terce, Sext and None shall be said with "Alleluia," but Vespers with antiphons. The responsories are never to be said with "Alleluia" except from Easter to Pentecost.

16: Performing God's Work During the Day.

"Seven times in the day," says the Prophet, "I have rendered praise to You" (Ps. 118:164).

Now that sacred number of seven will be fulfilled by us
if we perform the Offices of our service
at the time of the Morning Office,
of Prime, of Terce, of Sext, of None,
of Vespers and of Compline,
since it was of these day Hours that he said,
“Seven times in the day I have rendered praise to You.”
For as to the Night Office the same Prophet says,
“In the middle of the night I arose to glorify You” (Ps. 118:62).
Let us therefore bring our tribute of praise to our Creator
“for the judgments of His justice” (Ps. 118:164)
at these times:
the Morning Office, Prime, Terce, Sext, None,
Vespers and Compline;
and in the night let us arise to glorify Him.

17: How Many Psalms are to be Said.

We have already arranged the order of the psalmody
for the Night and Morning Offices;
let us now provide for the remaining Hours.
At Prime let three Psalms be said,
separately and not under one “Glory be to the Father.”
The hymn of that Hour
is to follow the verse “Incline unto my aid, O God,”
before the Psalms begin.
Upon completion of the three Psalms
let one lesson be recited,
then a verse,
the “Lord, have mercy on us” and the concluding prayers.
The Offices of Terce, Sext and None
are to be celebrated in the same order,
that is:
the “Incline unto my aid, O God,” the hymn proper to each Hour,
three Psalms, lesson and verse,
“Lord, have mercy on us” and concluding prayers.
If the community is a large one,
let the Psalms be sung with antiphons;
but if small,
let them be sung straight through.
Let the Psalms of the Vesper Office be limited to four,
with antiphons.
After these Psalms the lesson is to be recited,
then the responsory, the Ambrosian hymn, the verse,
the canticle from the Gospel book,
the litany, the Lord's Prayer and the concluding prayers.
Let Compline be limited to the saying of three Psalms,

which are to be said straight through without antiphon,
and after them the hymn of that Hour,
one lesson, a verse, the “Lord, have mercy on us,”
the blessing and the concluding prayers.

18: The Order of Psalms.

Let this verse be said:

“Incline unto my aid, O God;
O Lord, make haste to help me,”
and the “Glory be to the Father”
then the hymn proper to each Hour.

Then at Prime on Sunday
four sections of Psalm 118 are to be said;
and at each of the remaining Hours,
that is Terce, Sext and None,
three sections of the same Psalm 118.

At Prime on Monday let three Psalms be said,
namely Psalms 1, 2 and 6.

And so each day at Prime until Sunday
let three Psalms be said in numerical order, to Psalm 19,
but with Psalms 9 and 17 each divided into two parts.
Thus it comes about that the Night Office on Sunday
always begins with Psalm 20.

At Terce, Sext and None on Monday
let the nine remaining sections of Psalm 118 be said,
three at each of these Hours.

Psalm 118 having been completed, therefore,
on two days, Sunday and Monday,
let the nine Psalms from Psalm 119 to Psalm 127
be said at Terce, Sext and None,
three at each Hour,
beginning with Tuesday.

And let these same Psalms be repeated every day until Sunday
at the same Hours,
while the arrangement of hymns, lessons and verses
is kept the same on all days;
and thus Prime on Sunday will always begin with Psalm 118.

Vespers are to be sung with four Psalms every day.

These shall begin with Psalm 109 and go on to Psalm 147,
omitting those which are set apart for other Hours;
that is to say that

with the exception of Psalms 117 to 127 and Psalms 133 and 142,
all the rest of these are to be said at Vespers.

And since there are three Psalms too few,
let the longer ones of the above number be divided,
namely Psalms 138, 143 and 144.

But let Psalm 116 because of its brevity be joined to Psalm 115.
The order of the Vesper Psalms being thus settled,
let the rest of the Hour —
lesson, responsory, hymn, verse and canticle —
be carried out as we prescribed above.
At Compline the same Psalms are to be repeated every day,
namely Psalms 4, 90 and 133.
The order of psalmody for the day Hours being thus arranged,
let all the remaining Psalms be equally distributed
among the seven Night Offices
by dividing the longer Psalms among them
and assigning twelve Psalms to each night.
We strongly recommend, however,
that if this distribution of the Psalms is displeasing to anyone,
she should arrange them otherwise,
in whatever way she considers better,
but taking care in any case
that the Psalter with its full number of 150 Psalms
be chanted every week
and begun again every Sunday at the Night Office.
For those monastics show themselves too lazy
in the service to which they are vowed,
who chant less than the Psalter with the customary canticles
in the course of a week,
whereas we read that our holy Fathers
strenuously fulfilled that task in a single day.
May we, lukewarm that we are, perform it at least in a whole week!

19: The Manner of Saying the Divine Office.

We believe that the divine presence is everywhere
and that “the eyes of the Lord
are looking on the good and the evil in every place” (Prov. 15:3).
But we should believe this especially without any doubt
when we are assisting at the Work of God.
To that end let us be mindful always of the Prophet's words,
“Serve the Lord in fear” (Ps. 2:11)
and again “Sing praises wisely” (Ps. 46:8)
and “In the sight of the Angels I will sing praise to You” (Ps. 137:1).
Let us therefore consider how we ought to conduct ourselves
in sight of the Godhead and of His Angels,
and let us take part in the psalmody in such a way
that our mind may be in harmony with our voice.

20: Reverence in Prayer.

When we wish to suggest our wants to persons of high station,
we do not presume to do so

except with humility and reverence.
How much the more, then,
are complete humility and pure devotion necessary
in supplication of the Lord who is God of the universe!
And let us be assured
that it is not in saying a great deal that we shall be heard (Matt 6:7),
but in purity of heart and in tears of compunction.
Our prayer, therefore, ought to be short and pure,
unless it happens to be prolonged
by an inspiration of divine grace.
In community, however, let prayer be very short,
and when the Superior gives the signal let all rise together.

Different Topics.

21: The Deans of the Monastery.

If the community is a large one,
let there be chosen out of it
brethren of good repute and holy life,
and let them be appointed deans.
These shall take charge of their deaneries in all things,
observing the commandments of God
and the instructions of their Abbot.
Let men of such character be chosen deans
that the Abbot may with confidence
share his burdens among them.
Let them be chosen not by rank
but according to their worthiness of life
and the wisdom of their doctrine.
If any of these deans should become inflated with pride
and found deserving of censure,
let him be corrected once, and again, and a third time.
If he will not amend,
then let him be deposed
and another be put in his place who is worthy of it.
And we order the same to be done in the case of the Prior.

22: How the Sisters are to Sleep.

Let each one sleep in a separate bed.
Let them receive bedding suitable to their manner of life,
according to the Abbess's directions.
If possible let all sleep in one place;
but if the number does not allow this,
let them take their rest by tens or twenties
with the seniors who have charge of them.

A candle shall be kept burning in the room until morning.
Let them sleep clothed and girded with belts or cords —
but not with their knives at their sides,
lest they cut themselves in their sleep —
and thus be always ready to rise without delay
when the signal is given
and hasten to be before one another at the Work of God,
yet with all gravity and decorum.
The younger shall not have beds next to one another,
but among those of the older ones.
When they rise for the Work of God
let them gently encourage one another,
that the drowsy may have no excuse.

23: Excommunication for Faults.

If a brother is found to be obstinate,
or disobedient, or proud, or murmuring,
or habitually transgressing the Holy Rule in any point
and contemptuous of the orders of his seniors,
the latter shall admonish him secretly a first and a second time,
as Our Lord commands (Matt. 18:15).
If he fails to amend,
let him be given a public rebuke in front of the whole community.
But if even then he does not reform,
let him be placed under excommunication,
provided that he understands the seriousness of that penalty;
if he is perverse, however,
let him undergo corporal punishment.

24: The Measure of Excommunication.

The measure of excommunication or of chastisement
should correspond to the degree of fault,
which degree is estimated by the judgment of the Abbess.
If a sister is found guilty of lighter faults,
let her be excluded from the common table.
Now the program for one deprived of the company of the table
shall be as follows:
In the oratory she shall intone neither Psalm nor antiphon
nor shall she recite a lesson
until she has made satisfaction;
in the refectory she shall take her food alone
after the community meal,
so that if they eat at the sixth hour, for instance,
that sister shall eat at the ninth,
while if they eat at the ninth hour
she shall eat in the evening,

until by a suitable satisfaction she obtains pardon.

25: On Weightier Faults.

Let the brother who is guilty of a weightier fault
be excluded both from the table and from the oratory.
Let none of the brethren join him
either for company or for conversation.
Let him be alone at the work assigned him,
abiding in penitential sorrow
and pondering that terrible sentence of the Apostle
where he says that a man of that kind is handed over
for the destruction of the flesh,
that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord (1 Cor. 5:5).
Let him take his meals alone
in the measure and at the hour
which the Abbot shall consider suitable for him.
He shall not be blessed by those who pass by,
nor shall the food that is given him be blessed.

26: Association with the Excommunicated.

If any sister presumes
without an order from the Abbess
to associate in any way with an excommunicated sister,
or to speak with her,
or to send her a message,
let her incur a similar punishment of excommunication.

27: How Solicitous the Abbot Should be for the Excommunicated.

Let the Abbot be most solicitous
in his concern for delinquent brethren,
for “it is not the healthy but the sick who need a physician” (Matt 9:12)
And therefore he ought to use every means
that a wise physician would use.
Let him send senpectae,
that is, brethren of mature years and wisdom,
who may as it were secretly console the wavering brother
and induce him to make humble satisfaction;
comforting him
that he may not “be overwhelmed by excessive grief” (2 Cor. 2:7),
but that, as the Apostle says,
charity may be strengthened in him (2 Cor. 2:8).
And let everyone pray for him.
For the Abbot must have the utmost solicitude
and exercise all prudence and diligence
lest he lose any of the sheep entrusted to him.
Let him know

that what he has undertaken is the care of weak souls
and not a tyranny over strong ones;
and let him fear the Prophet's warning
through which God says,
“What you saw to be fat you took to yourselves,
and what was feeble you cast away” (Ezec. 34:3,4).
Let him rather imitate the loving example of the Good Shepherd
who left the ninety-nine sheep in the mountains
and went to look for the one sheep that had gone astray,
on whose weakness He had such compassion
that He deigned to place it on His own sacred shoulders
and thus carry it back to the flock (Luke 15:4-5).

28: Those Who Will Not Amend after Corrections.

If a sister who has been frequently corrected for some fault,
and even excommunicated,
does not amend,
let a harsher correction be applied,
that is, let the punishment of the rod be administered.
But if she still does not reform
or perhaps (which God forbid)
even rises up in pride and wants to defend her conduct,
then let the Abbess do what a wise physician would do.
Having used applications,
the ointments of exhortation,
the medicines of the Holy Scriptures,
finally the cautery of excommunication
and of the strokes of the rod,
if she sees that her efforts are of no avail,
let her apply a still greater remedy,
her own prayers and those of all the others,
that the Lord, who can do all things
may restore health to the sister who is sick.
But if she is not healed even in this way,
then let the Abbess use the knife of amputation,
according to the Apostle's words,
“Expel the evil one from your midst” (1 Cor. 5:13),
and again,
“If the faithless one departs, let her depart” (1 Cor. 7:15)
lest one diseased sheep contaminate the whole flock.

29: Whether Brethren Who Leave the Monastery Should be Received Again.

If a brother
who through his own fault leaves the monastery
should wish to return,
let him first promise full reparation for his having gone away;

and then let him be received in the lowest place,
as a test of his humility.
And if he should leave again,
let him be taken back again,
and so a third time;
but he should understand that after this
all way of return is denied him.

30: How Boys are to be Corrected.

Every age and degree of understanding
should have its proper measure of discipline.
With regard to boys and adolescents, therefore,
or those who cannot understand the seriousness
of the penalty of excommunication,
whenever such as these are delinquent
let them be subjected to severe fasts
or brought to terms by harsh beatings,
that they may be cured.

31: What Kind of Man the Cellarer of the Monastery Should be.

As cellarer of the monastery
let there be chosen from the community
one who is wise, of mature character, sober,
not a great eater, not haughty, not excitable,
not offensive, not slow, not wasteful,
but a God-fearing man
who may be like a father to the whole community.
Let him have charge of everything.
He shall do nothing without the Abbot's orders,
but keep to his instructions.
Let him not vex the brethren.
If any brother
happens to make some unreasonable demand of him,
instead of vexing the brother with a contemptuous refusal
he should humbly give the reason
for denying the improper request.
Let him keep guard over his own soul,
mindful always of the Apostle's saying
that "he who has ministered well
will acquire for himself a good standing" (1 Tim. 3:13).
Let him take the greatest care
of the sick, of children, of guests and of the poor,
knowing without doubt
that he will have to render an account for all these
on the Day of Judgment.
Let him regard all the utensils of the monastery

and its whole property
as if they were the sacred vessels of the altar.
Let him not think that he may neglect anything.
He should be neither a miser
nor a prodigal and squanderer of the monastery's substance,
but should do all things with measure
and in accordance with the Abbot's instructions.
Above all things let him have humility;
and if he has nothing else to give
let him give a good word in answer
for it is written,
“A good word is above the best gift” (Eccles. 18:17).
Let him have under his care
all that the Abbot has assigned to him,
but not presume to deal with what he has forbidden him.
Let him give the brethren their appointed allowance of food
without any arrogance or delay,
that they may not be scandalized,
mindful of the Word of God as to what he deserves
“who shall scandalize one of the little ones” (Matt 18:6).
If the community is a large one,
let helpers be given him,
that by their assistance
he may fulfil with a quiet mind the office committed to him.
The proper times should be observed
in giving the things that have to be given
and asking for the things that have to be asked for,
that no one may be troubled or vexed in the house of God.

32: The Property of the Monastery.

For the care of the monastery's property
in tools, clothing and other articles
let the Abbess appoint sisters
on whose manner of life and character she can rely;
and let her, as she shall judge to be expedient,
consign the various articles to them,
to be looked after and to be collected again.
The Abbess shall keep a list of these articles,
so that
as the sisters succeed one another in their assignments
she may know what she gives and what she receives back.
If anyone treats the monastery's property
in a slovenly or careless way,
let her be corrected.
If she fails to amend,
let her undergo the discipline of the Rule.

33: Whether Monks Ought to Have Anything of Their Own.

This vice especially
is to be cut out of the monastery by the roots.
Let no one presume to give or receive anything
without the Abbot's leave,
or to have anything as his own —
anything whatever,
whether book or tablets or pen or whatever it may be —
since they are not permitted to have even their bodies or wills
at their own disposal;
but for all their necessities
let them look to the Father of the monastery.
And let it be unlawful to have anything
which the Abbot has not given or allowed.
Let all things be common to all,
as it is written (Acts 4:32),
and let no one say or assume that anything is his own.
But if anyone is caught indulging in this most wicked vice,
let him be admonished once and a second time.
If he fails to amend,
let him undergo punishment.

34 : Whether all Should Receive in Equal Measure.

Let us follow the Scripture,
“Distribution was made to each
according as anyone had need” (Acts 4:35).
By this we do not mean that there should be respecting of persons
(which God forbid),
but consideration for infirmities.
She who needs less should thank God and not be discontented;
but she who needs more
should be humbled by the thought of her infirmity
rather than feeling important
on account of the kindness shown her.
Thus all the members will be at peace.
Above all, let not the evil of murmuring appear
for any reason whatsoever
in the least word or sign.
If anyone is caught at it,
let her be placed under very severe discipline.

35: The Weekly Servers in the Kitchen.

Let the brethren serve one another,
and let no one be excused from the kitchen service
except by reason of sickness

or occupation in some important work.
For this service brings increase of reward and of charity.
But let helpers be provided for the weak ones,
that they may not be distressed by this work;
and indeed let everyone have help,
as required by the size of the community
or the circumstances of the locality.
If the community is a large one,
the cellarer shall be excused from the kitchen service;
and so also those whose occupations are of greater utility,
as we said above.
Let the rest serve one another in charity.
The one who is ending his week of service
shall do the cleaning on Saturday.
He shall wash the towels
with which the brethren wipe their hands and feet;
and this server who is ending his week,
aided by the one who is about to begin,
shall wash the feet of all the brethren.
He shall return the utensils of his office to the cellarer
clean and in good condition,
and the cellarer in turn shall consign them to the incoming server,
in order that he may know
what he gives out and what he receives back.
An hour before the meal
let the weekly servers each receive a drink and some bread
over and above the appointed allowance,
in order that at the meal time they may serve their brethren
without murmuring and without excessive fatigue.
On solemn days, however, let them wait until after Mass.
Immediately after the Morning Office on Sunday,
the incoming and outgoing servers
shall prostrate themselves before all the brethren in the oratory
and ask their prayers.
Let the server who is ending his week say this verse:
“Blessed are You, O Lord God,
who have helped me and consoled me.”
When this has been said three times
and the outgoing server has received his blessing,
then let the incoming server follow and say,
“Incline unto my aid, O God;
O Lord, make haste to help me.”
Let this also be repeated three times by all,
and having received his blessing
let him enter his service.

36: On the Sick.

Before all things and above all things,
care must be taken of the sick,
so that they will be served as if they were Christ in person;
for He Himself said, "I was sick, and you visited Me" (Matt 25:36),
and, "What you did for one of these least ones, you did for Me" (Matt. 25:40).
But let the sick on their part consider
that they are being served for the honor of God,
and let them not annoy their sisters who are serving them
by their unnecessary demands.
Yet they should be patiently borne with,
because from such as these is gained a more abundant reward.
Therefore the Abbess shall take the greatest care
that they suffer no neglect.
For these sick let there be assigned a special room
and an attendant who is God-fearing, diligent and solicitous.
Let the use of baths be afforded the sick
as often as may be expedient;
but to the healthy, and especially to the young,
let them be granted more rarely.
Moreover,
let the use of meat be granted to the sick who are very weak,
for the restoration of their strength;
but when they are convalescent,
let all abstain from meat as usual.
The Abbess shall take the greatest care
that the sick be not neglected by the cellarers or the attendants;
for she also is responsible for what is done wrongly by her disciples.

37: On the Old and Children.

Although human nature itself is drawn to special kindness
towards these times of life,
that is towards the old and children,
still the authority of the Rule should also provide for them.
Let their weakness be always taken into account,
and let them by no means be held to the rigor of the Rule
with regard to food.
On the contrary,
let a kind consideration be shown to them,
and let them eat before the regular hours.

38: On the Weekly Reader.

The meals of the sisters should not be without reading.
Nor should the reader be
anyone who happens to take up the book;
but there should be a reader for the whole week,

entering that office on Sunday.
Let this incoming reader,
after Mass and Communion,
ask all to pray for her
that God may keep her from the spirit of pride
And let her intone the following verse,
which shall be said three times by all in the oratory:
“O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth shall declare Your praise.”
Then, having received a blessing,
let her enter on the reading.
And let absolute silence be kept at table,
so that no whispering may be heard
nor any voice except the reader's.
As to the things they need while they eat and drink,
let the sisters pass them to one another
so that no one need ask for anything.
If anything is needed, however,
let it be asked for by means of some audible sign
rather than by speech.
Nor shall anyone at table presume to ask questions
about the reading or anything else,
lest that give occasion for talking;
except that the Superior may perhaps wish
to say something briefly for the purpose of edification.
The sister who is reader for the week
shall take a little ablution before she begins to read,
on account of the Holy Communion
and lest perhaps the fast be hard for her to bear.
She shall take her meal afterwards
with the kitchen and table servers of the week.
The sisters are not to read or chant in order,
but only those who edify their hearers.

39: On the Measure of Food.

We think it sufficient for the daily dinner,
whether at the sixth or the ninth hour,
that every table have two cooked dishes
on account of individual infirmities,
so that he who for some reason cannot eat of the one
may make his meal of the other
Therefore let two cooked dishes suffice for all the brethren;
and if any fruit or fresh vegetables are available,
let a third dish be added.
Let a good pound weight of bread suffice for the day,
whether there be only one meal or both dinner and supper.

If they are to have supper,
the cellarer shall reserve a third of that pound,
to be given them at supper.
But if it happens that the work was heavier,
it shall lie within the Abbot's discretion and power,
should it be expedient,
to add something to the fare.
Above all things, however,
over-indulgence must be avoided
and a monk must never be overtaken by indigestion;
for there is nothing so opposed to the Christian character
as over-indulgence
according to Our Lord's words,
“See to it that your hearts be not burdened
with over-indulgence” (Luke 21:34).
Young boys
shall not receive the same amount of food as their elders,
but less;
and frugality shall be observed in all circumstances.
Except the sick who are very weak,
let all abstain entirely
from eating the flesh of four-footed animals.

40: On the Measure of Drink.

“Everyone has her own gift from God,
one in this way and another in that” (1 Cor. 7:7).
It is therefore with some misgiving
that we regulate the measure of others' sustenance.
Nevertheless, keeping in view the needs of the weak,
we believe that a *hemina* of wine a day is sufficient for each.
But those to whom God gives the strength to abstain
should know that they will receive a special reward.
If the circumstances of the place,
or the work
or the heat of summer
require a greater measure,
the superior shall use her judgment in the matter,
taking care always
that there be no occasion for surfeit or drunkenness.
We read
it is true,
that wine is by no means a drink for monastics;
but since the monastics of our day cannot be persuaded of this
let us at least agree to drink sparingly and not to satiety,
because “wine makes even the wise fall away” (Eccles. 19:2).
But where the circumstances of the place are such

that not even the measure prescribed above can be supplied,
but much less or none at all,
let those who live there bless God and not murmur.
Above all things do we give this admonition,
that they abstain from murmuring.

41: At What Hours the Meals Should be Taken.

From holy Easter until Pentecost
let the brothers take dinner at the sixth hour
and supper in the evening.
From Pentecost throughout the summer,
unless the monks have work in the fields
let them fast on Wednesdays and Fridays until the ninth hour;
on the other days let them dine at the sixth hour.
This dinner at the sixth hour shall be the daily schedule
if they have work in the fields
or the heat of summer is extreme;
the Abbot's foresight shall decide on this.
Thus it is that he should adapt and arrange everything
in such a way that souls may be saved
and that the brethren may do their work
without just cause for murmuring.
From the Ides of September until the beginning of Lent
let them always take their dinner at the ninth hour.
In Lent until Easter let them dine in the evening.
But this evening hour shall be so determined
that they will not need the light of a lamp while eating,
Indeed at all seasons
let the hour, whether for supper or for dinner, be so arranged
that everything will be done by daylight.

42: that No One Speak After Compline.

Monastics ought to be zealous for silence at all times,
but especially during the hours of the night.
For every season, therefore,
whether there be fasting or two meals,
let the program be as follows:
If it be a season when there are two meals,
then as soon as they have risen from supper
they shall all sit together,
and one of them shall read the
or the Lives of the Fathers
or something else that may edify the hearers;
not the Heptateuch or the Books of Kings, however,
because it will not be expedient for weak minds
to hear those parts of Scripture at that hour;

but they shall be read at other times.
If it be a day of fast,
then having allowed a short interval after Vespers
they shall proceed at once to the reading of the Conferences,
as prescribed above;
four or five pages being read, or as much as time permits,
so that during the delay provided by this reading
all may come together,
including those who may have been occupied
in some work assigned them.
When all, therefore, are gathered together,
let them say Compline;
and when they come out from Compline,
no one shall be allowed to say anything from that time on.
And if anyone should be found evading this rule of silence,
let her undergo severe punishment.
An exception shall be made
if the need of speaking to guests should arise
or if the Abbess should give someone an order.
But even this should be done with the utmost gravity
and the most becoming restraint.

43: On Those Who Come Late to the Work of God or to Table.

At the hour for the Divine Office,
as soon as the signal is heard,
let them abandon whatever they may have in hand
and hasten with the greatest speed,
yet with seriousness, so that there is no excuse for levity.
Let nothing, therefore, be put before the Work of God.
If at the Night Office
anyone arrives after the “Glory be to the Father” of Psalm 94 —
which Psalm for this reason we wish to be said
very slowly and protractedly —
let him not stand in his usual place in the choir;
but let him stand last of all,
or in a place set aside by the Abbot for such negligent ones
in order that they may be seen by him and by all.
He shall remain there until the Work of God has been completed,
and then do penance by a public satisfaction.
the reason why we have judged it fitting
for them so stand in the last place or in a place apart
is that,
being seen by all,
they may amend for very shame.
For if they remain outside of the oratory,
there will perhaps be someone who will go back to bed and sleep

or at least seat himself outside and indulge in idle talk,
and thus an occasion will be provided for the evil one.
But let them go inside,
that they many not lose the whole Office,
and may amend for the future.
At the day Hours
anyone who does not arrive at the Work of God
until after the verse
and the “Glory be to the Father” for the first Psalm following it
shall stand in the last place,
according to our ruling above.
Nor shall he presume to join the choir in their chanting
until he has made satisfaction,
unless the Abbot should pardon him and give him permission;
but even then the offender must make satisfaction for his fault.
Anyone who does not come to table before the verse,
so that all together may say the verse and the oration
and all sit down to table at the same time —
anyone who
through his own carelessness or bad habit
does not come on time
shall be corrected for this up to the second time.
If then he does not amend,
he shall not be allowed to share in the common table,
but shall be separated from the company of all
and made to eat alone,
and his portion of wine shall be taken away from him,
until he has made satisfaction and has amended.
And let him suffer a like penalty who is not present
at the verse said after the meal.
But if anyone is offered something by the Superior
and refuses to take it,
then when the time comes
that he desires what he formerly refused
or something else,
let him receive nothing whatever
until he has made proper satisfaction.

44: How the Excommunicated are to Make Satisfaction.

One who for serious faults is excommunicated
from oratory and table
shall make satisfaction as follows.
At the hour when the celebration of the Work of God is concluded
in the oratory,
let her lie prostrate before the door of the oratory,
saying nothing, but only lying prone with her face to the ground

at the feet of all as they come out of the oratory.
And let her continue to do this
until the Abbess judges that satisfaction has been made.
Then, when she has come at the Abbess's bidding,
let her cast herself first at the Abbess's feet
and then at the feet of all,
that they may pray for her.
And next, if the Abbess so orders,
let her be received into the choir,
to the place which the Abbess appoints,
but with the provision that she shall not presume
to intone Psalm or lesson or anything else in the oratory
without a further order from the Abbess.
Moreover, at every Hour,
when the Work of God is ended,
let her cast herself on the ground in the place where she stands.
And let her continue to satisfy in this way
until the Abbess again orders her finally to cease
from this satisfaction.
But those who for slight faults are excommunicated
only from table
shall make satisfaction in the oratory,
and continue in it till an order from the Abbess,
until she blesses them and says, "It is enough."

45: On Those Who Make Mistakes in the Oratory.

When anyone has made a mistake
while reciting a Psalm, a responsory,
an antiphon or a lesson,
if he does not humble himself there before all
by making a satisfaction,
let him undergo a greater punishment
because he would not correct by humility
what he did wrong through carelessness.
But boys for such faults shall be whipped.

46: On Those Who Fail in Any Other Matters.

When anyone is engaged in any sort of work,
whether in the kitchen, in the cellar, in a shop,
in the bakery, in the garden, while working at some craft,
or in any other place,
and she commits some fault,
or breaks something, or loses something,
or transgresses in any other way whatsoever,
if she does not come immediately
before the Abbess and the community

of her own accord
to make satisfaction and confess her fault,
then when it becomes known through another,
let her be subjected to a more severe correction.
But if the sin-sickness of the soul is a hidden one,
let her reveal it only to the Abbess or to a spiritual mother,
who knows how to cure her own and others' wounds
without exposing them and making them public.

47: On Giving the Signal for the Time of the Work of God.

The indicating of the hour for the Work of God
by day and by night
shall devolve upon the Abbot
either to give the signal himself
or to assign this duty to such a careful brother
that everything will take place at the proper hours.
Let the Psalms and the antiphons be intoned
by those who are appointed for it,
in their order after the Abbot.
And no one shall presume to sing or read
unless he can fulfill that office
in such a way as to edify the hearers.
Let this function be performed
with humility, gravity and reverence,
and by him whom the Abbot has appointed.

48: The Daily Labor.

Idleness is the enemy of the soul.
Therefore the sisters should be occupied
at certain times in manual labor,
and again at fixed hours in sacred reading.
To that end
we think that the times for each may be prescribed as follows.
From Easter until the Calends of October,
when they come out from Prime in the morning
let them labor at whatever is necessary
until about the fourth hour,
and from the fourth hour until about the sixth
let them apply themselves to reading.
After the sixth hour,
having left the table,
let them rest on their beds in perfect silence;
or if anyone may perhaps want to read,
let her read to herself
in such a way as not to disturb anyone else.
Let None be said rather early,

at the middle of the eighth hour,
and let them again do what work has to be done until Vespers.
And if the circumstances of the place or their poverty
should require that they themselves
do the work of gathering the harvest,
let them not be discontented;
for then are they truly monastics
when they live by the labor of their hands,
as did our Fathers and the Apostles.
Let all things be done with moderation, however,
for the sake of the faint-hearted.
From the Calends of October until the beginning of Lent,
let them apply themselves to reading
up to the end of the second hour.
At the second hour let Terce be said,
and then let all labor at the work assigned them until None.
At the first signal for the Hour of None
let everyone break off from her work,
and hold herself ready for the sounding of the second signal.
After the meal
let them apply themselves to their reading or to the Psalms.
On the days of Lent,
from morning until the end of the third hour
let them apply themselves to their reading,
and from then until the end of the tenth hour
let them do the work assigned them.
And in these days of Lent
they shall each receive a book from the library,
which they shall read straight through from the beginning.
These books are to be given out at the beginning of Lent.
But certainly one or two of the seniors should be deputed
to go about the monastery
at the hours when the sisters are occupied in reading
and see that there be no lazy sister
who spends her time in idleness or gossip
and does not apply herself to the reading,
so that she is not only unprofitable to herself
but also distracts others.
If such a one be found (which God forbid),
let her be corrected once and a second time;
if she does not amend,
let her undergo the punishment of the Rule
in such a way that the rest may take warning.
Moreover, one sister shall not associate with another
at inappropriate times.
On Sundays, let all occupy themselves in reading,

except those who have been appointed to various duties.
But if anyone should be so negligent and shiftless
that she will not or cannot study or read,
let her be given some work to do
so that she will not be idle.
Weak or sickly sisters should be assigned a task or craft
of such a nature as to keep them from idleness
and at the same time not to overburden them or drive them away
with excessive toil.
Their weakness must be taken into consideration by the Abbess.

49: Lent.

Although the life of a monk
ought to have about it at all times
the character of a Lenten observance,
yet since few have the virtue for that,
we therefore urge that during the actual days of Lent
the brethren keep their lives most pure
and at the same time wash away during these holy days
all the negligences of other times.
And this will be worthily done
if we restrain ourselves from all vices
and give ourselves up to prayer with tears,
to reading, to compunction of heart and to abstinence.
During these days, therefore,
let us increase somewhat the usual burden of our service,
as by private prayers and by abstinence in food and drink.
Thus everyone of his own will may offer God
“with joy of the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 1:6)
something above the measure required of him.
From his body, that is
he may withhold some food, drink, sleep, talking and jesting;
and with the joy of spiritual desire
he may look forward to holy Easter.
Let each one, however, suggest to his Abbot
what it is that he wants to offer,
and let it be done with his blessing and approval.
For anything done without the permission of the spiritual father
will be imputed to presumption and vainglory
and will merit no reward.
Therefore let everything be done with the Abbot's approval.

50: On Sisters Who are Far From the Oratory.

Those sisters who are working at a great distance
and cannot get to the oratory at the proper time —
the Abbess judging that such is the case —

shall perform the Work of God
in the place where they are working,
bending their knees in reverence before God.
Likewise those who have been sent on a journey
shall not let the appointed Hours pass by,
but shall say the Office by themselves as well as they can
and not neglect to render the task of their service.

51: On Brethren Who Go Not Very Far Away.

A Brother who is sent out on some business
and is expected to return to the monastery that same day
shall not presume to eat while he is out,
even if he is urgently requested to do so
by any person whomsoever,
unless he has permission from his Abbot.
And if he acts otherwise, let him be excommunicated.

52: On the Oratory of the Monastery.

Let the oratory be what it is called, a place of prayer;
and let nothing else be done there or kept there.
When the Work of God is ended,
let all go out in perfect silence,
and let reverence for God be observed,
so that any sister who may wish to pray privately
will not be hindered by another's misconduct.
And at other times also,
if anyone should want to pray by herself,
let her go in simply and pray,
not in a loud voice but with tears and fervor of heart.
She who does not say her prayers in this way, therefore,
shall not be permitted to remain in the oratory
when the Work of God is ended,
lest another be hindered, as we have said.

53: The Reception of Guests.

Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ,
for He is going to say,
“I came as a guest, and you received Me” (Matt. 25:35).
And to all let due honor be shown,
especially to the domestics of the faith and to pilgrims.
As soon as a guest is announced, therefore,
let the Superior or the brethren meet him
with all charitable service.
And first of all let them pray together,
and then exchange the kiss of peace.
For the kiss of peace should not be offered

until after the prayers have been said,
on account of the devil's deceptions.
In the salutation of all guests, whether arriving or departing,
let all humility be shown.
Let the head be bowed
or the whole body prostrated on the ground
in adoration of Christ, who indeed is received in their persons.
After the guests have been received and taken to prayer,
let the Superior or someone appointed by him sit with them.
Let the divine law be read before the guest for his edification,
and then let all kindness be shown him.
The Superior shall break his fast for the sake of a guest,
unless it happens to be a principal fast day
which may not be violated.
The brethren, however, shall observe the customary fasts.
Let the Abbot give the guests water for their hands;
and let both Abbot and community wash the feet of all guests.
After the washing of the feet let them say this verse:
“We have received Your mercy, O God,
in the midst of Your temple” (Ps.47:10).
In the reception of the poor and of pilgrims
the greatest care and solicitude should be shown,
because it is especially in them that Christ is received;
for as far as the rich are concerned,
the very fear which they inspire
wins respect for them.
Let there be a separate kitchen for the Abbot and guests,
that the brethren may not be disturbed when guests,
who are never lacking in a monastery,
arrive at irregular hours.
Let two brethren capable of filling the office well
be appointed for a year to have charge of this kitchen.
Let them be given such help as they need,
that they may serve without murmuring.
And on the other hand,
when they have less to occupy them,
let them go out to whatever work is assigned them.
And not only in their case
but in all the offices of the monastery
let this arrangement be observed,
that when help is needed it be supplied,
and again when the workers are unoccupied
they do whatever they are bidden.
The guest house also shall be assigned to a brother
whose soul is possessed by the fear of God.
Let there be a sufficient number of beds made up in it;

and let the house of God be managed by prudent men
and in a prudent manner.

On no account shall anyone who is not so ordered
associate or converse with guests.

But if he should meet them or see them,
let him greet them humbly, as we have said,
ask their blessing and pass on,
saying that he is not allowed to converse with a guest.

54: Whether a Monastic Should Receive Letters.

On no account shall a monastic be allowed
to receive letters, blessed tokens or any little gift whatsoever
from parents or anyone else,
or from her sisters,
or to give the same,
without the Abbess's permission.

But if anything is sent her even by her parents,
let her not presume to take it
before it has been shown to the Abbess.
And it shall be in the Abbess's power to decide
to whom it shall be given,
if she allows it to be received;
and the sister to whom it was sent should not be grieved,
lest occasion be given to the devil.
Should anyone presume to act otherwise,
let her undergo the discipline of the Rule.

55: The Clothes of the Brethren.

Let clothing be given to the brethren
according to the nature of the place in which they dwell
and its climate;
for in cold regions more will be needed,
and in warm regions less.
This is to be taken into consideration, therefore, by the Abbot.
We believe, however, that in ordinary places
the following dress is sufficient for each monk:
a tunic,
a cowl (thick and woolly for winter, thin or worn for summer),
a scapular for work,
stockings and shoes to cover the feet.
The monks should not complain
about the color or the coarseness of any of these things,
but be content with what can be found
in the district where they live and
can be purchased cheaply.
The Abbot shall see to the size of the garments,

that they be not too short for those who wear them,
but of the proper fit.
Let those who receive new clothes
always give back the old ones at once,
to be put away in the wardrobe for the poor.
For it is sufficient if a monk has two tunics and two cowls,
to allow for night wear and for the washing of these garments;
more than that is superfluity and should be taken away.
Let them return their stockings also and anything else that is old
when they receive new ones.
Those who are sent on a journey
shall receive drawers from the wardrobe,
which they shall wash and restore on their return.
And let their cowls and tunics be somewhat better
than what they usually wear.
These they shall receive from the wardrobe
when they set out on a journey,
and restore when they return.
For bedding let this suffice:
a mattress, a blanket, a coverlet and a pillow.
The beds, moreover, are to be examined frequently by the Abbot,
to see if any private property be found in them.
If anyone should be found to have something
that he did not receive from the Abbot,
let him undergo the most severe discipline.
And in order that this vice of private ownership
may be cut out by the roots,
the Abbot should provide all the necessary articles:
cowl, tunic, stockings, shoes, belt,
knife, stylus, needle, handkerchief, writing tablets;
that all pretext of need may be taken away.
Yet the Abbot should always keep in mind
the sentence from the Acts of the Apostles
that “distribution was made to each according as anyone had need” (Acts 4:35).
In this manner, therefore,
let the Abbot consider weaknesses of the needy
and not the ill-will of the envious.
But in all his decisions
let him think about the retribution of God.

56: Abbess' Table.

Let the Abbess's table always be with the guests
and the pilgrims. But when there are no guests,
let it be in her power to invite whom she will of the sisters.
Yet one or two seniors must always be left with the others
for the sake of discipline.

57: The Artisans.

If there are artisans in the monastery,
let them practice their crafts with all humility,
provided the Abbot has given permission.
But if any one of them becomes conceited
over his skill in his craft,
because he seems to be conferring a benefit on the monastery,
let him be taken from his craft
and no longer exercise it unless,
after he has humbled himself,
the Abbot again gives him permission.
If any of the work of the craftsmen is to be sold,
those responsible for the sale
must not dare to practice any fraud.
Let them always remember Ananias and Saphira,
who incurred bodily death (Acts 5:1-11),
lest they and all who perpetrate fraud
in monastery affairs
suffer spiritual death.
And in the prices let not the sin of avarice creep in,
but let the goods always be sold a little cheaper
than they can be sold by people in the world,
“that in all things God may be glorified” (1 Peter 4:11).

58: How to receive Sisters.

When anyone is newly come for the reformation of her life,
let her not be granted an easy entrance;
but, as the Apostle says,
“Test the spirits to see whether they are from God.”
If the newcomer, therefore, perseveres in her knocking,
and if it is seen after four or five days
that she bears patiently the harsh treatment offered her
and the difficulty of admission,
and that she persists in her petition,
then let entrance be granted her,
and let her stay in the guest house for a few days.
After that let her live in the novitiate,
where the novices study, eat and sleep.
A senior shall be assigned to them who is skilled in winning souls,
to watch over them with the utmost care.
Let her examine whether the novice is truly seeking God,
and whether she is zealous
for the Work of God, for obedience and for trials.
Let the novice be told all the hard and rugged ways
by which the journey to God is made.

If she promises stability and perseverance,
then at the end of two months
let this rule be read through to her,
and let her be addressed thus:
“Here is the law under which you wish to fight.
If you can observe it, enter;
if you cannot, you are free to depart.”
If she still stands firm,
let her be taken to the above-mentioned novitiate
and again tested in all patience.
And after the lapse of six months let the Rule be read to her,
that she may know on what she is entering.
And if she still remains firm,
after four months let the same Rule be read to her again.
Then, having deliberated with herself,
if she promises to keep it in its entirety
and to observe everything that is commanded,
let her be received into the community.
But let her understand that,
according to the law of the Rule,
from that day forward she may not leave the monastery
nor withdraw her neck from under the yoke of the Rule
which she was free to refuse or to accept
during that prolonged deliberation.
When she is to be received
she promises before all in the oratory
stability,
fidelity to monastic life
and obedience.
This promise she shall make before God and His Saints,
so that if she should ever act otherwise,
she may know that she will be condemned by Him whom she mocks.
Of this promise of hers let her draw up a document
in the name of the Saints whose relics are there
and of the Abbess who is present.
Let her write this document with her own hand;
or if she is illiterate, let another write it at her request,
and let the novice put her mark to it.
Then let her place it with her own hand upon the altar;
and when she has placed it there,
let the novice at once intone this verse:
“Receive me, O Lord, according to Your word, and I shall live:
and let me not be confounded in my hope” (Ps. 118[119]:116).
Let the whole community answer this verse three times
and add the “Glory be to the Father.”
Then let the novice prostrate herself at each one's feet,

that they may pray for her.
And from that day forward
let her be counted as one of the community.
If she has any property,
let her either give it beforehand to the poor
or by solemn donation bestow it on the monastery,
reserving nothing at all for herself,
as indeed she knows that from that day forward
she will no longer have power even over her own body.
At once, therefore, in the oratory,
let her be divested of her own clothes which she is wearing
and dressed in the clothes of the monastery.
But let the clothes of which she was divested
be put aside in the wardrobe and kept there.
Then if she should ever listen to the persuasions of the devil
and decide to leave the monastery (which God forbid),
she may be divested of the monastic clothes and cast out.
Her document, however,
which the Abbess has taken from the altar,
shall not be returned to her, but shall be kept in the monastery.

59: On the Sons of Nobles and of the Poor Who are Offered.

If anyone of the nobility
offers his son to God in the monastery
and the boy is very young,
let his parents draw up the document which we mentioned above;
and at the oblation
let them wrap the document itself and the boy's hand in the altar cloth.
That is how they offer him.
As regards their property,
they shall promise in the same petition under oath
that they will never of themselves, or through an intermediary,
or in any way whatever,
give him anything
or provide him with the opportunity of owning anything.
Or else,
if they are unwilling to do this,
and if they want to offer something as an alms to the monastery
for their advantage,
let them make a donation
of the property they wish to give to the monastery,
reserving the income to themselves if they wish.
And in this way let everything be barred,
so that the boy may have no expectations
whereby (which God forbid) he might be deceived and ruined,
as we have learned by experience.

Let those who are less well-to-do make a similar offering.
But those who have nothing at all
shall simply draw up the document
and offer their son before witnesses at the oblation.

60: On Priests Who May Wish to Live in the Monastery.

If any ordained priest
should ask to be received into the monastery,
permission shall not be granted too readily.
But if he is quite persistent in his request,
let him know
that he will have to observe the whole discipline of the Rule
and that nothing will be relaxed in his favor,
that it may be as it is written:
“Friend, for what have you come (Matt. 26:50)?”
It shall be granted him, however, to stand next after the Abbot
and to give blessings and to celebrate Mass,
but only by order of the Abbot.
Without such order let him not make any exceptions for himself,
knowing that he is subject to the discipline of the Rule;
but rather let him give an example of humility to all.
If there happens to be question of an appointment
or of some business in the monastery,
let him expect the rank due him
according to the date of his entrance into the monastery,
and not the place granted him
out of reverence for the priesthood.
If any clerics, moved by the same desire,
should wish to join the monastery,
let them be placed in a middle rank.
But they too are to be admitted only if they promise
observance of the Rule and stability.

61: How Pilgrim Monks are to be Received.

If a pilgrim monastic coming from a distant region
wants to live as a guest of the monastery,
let her be received for as long a time as she desires,
provided she is content
with the customs of the place as she finds them
and does not disturb the monastery by superfluous demands,
but is simply content with what she finds.
If, however, she censures or points out anything reasonably
and with the humility of charity,
let the Abbess consider prudently
whether perhaps it was for that very purpose
that the Lord sent her.

If afterwards she should want to bind herself to stability,
her wish should not be denied her,
especially since there has been opportunity
during her stay as a guest
to discover her character.
But if as a guest she was found exacting or prone to vice,
not only should she be denied membership in the community,
but she should even be politely requested to leave,
lest others be corrupted by her evil life.
If, however, she has not proved to be the kind
who deserves to be put out,
she should not only on her own application be received
as a member of the community,
but she should even be persuaded to stay,
that the others may be instructed by her example,
and because in every place it is the same Lord who is served,
the same King for whom the battle is fought.
Moreover, if the Abbess perceives that she is worthy,
she may put her in a somewhat higher rank.
[And not only with regard to a nun
but also with regard to those in priestly or clerical orders
previously mentioned,]*
the Abbess may establish them in a higher rank
than would be theirs by date of entrance
if she perceives that their life is deserving.
Let the Abbess take care, however,
never to receive a nun from another known monastery
as a member of her community
without the consent of her Abbess or a letter of recommendation;
for it is written,
“Do not to another what you would not want done to yourself” (Tob. 4:16).

[Applicable only to women of some contemporary monastic communities in the Anglican Communion.]

62: On the Priests of the Monastery.

If an Abbot desire
to have a priest or a deacon ordained for his monastery,
let him choose one
who is worthy to exercise the priestly office.
But let the one who is ordained
beware of self-exaltation or pride;
and let him not presume to do anything
except what is commanded him by the Abbot,
knowing that he is so much the more subject
to the discipline of the Rule.
Nor should he by reason of his priesthood forget

the obedience and the discipline required by the Rule,
but make ever more and more progress towards God.
Let him always keep the place which he received
on entering the monastery,
except in his duties at the altar
or in case the choice of the community and the will of the Abbot
should promote him for the worthiness of his life.
Yet he must understand
that he is to observe the rules laid down by deans and Priors.
Should he presume to act otherwise,
let him be judged not as a priest but as a rebel.
And if he does not reform after repeated admonitions,
let even the Bishop be brought in as a witness.
If then he still fails to amend,
and his offenses are notorious,
let him be put out of the monastery,
but only if his contumacy is such
that he refuses to submit or to obey the Rule.

63: On the Order of the Community.

Let all keep their places in the monastery
established by the time of their entrance,
the merit of their lives and the decision of the Abbot.
Yet the Abbot must not disturb the flock committed to him,
nor by an arbitrary use of his power ordain anything unjustly;
but let him always think
of the account he will have to render to God
for all his decisions and his deeds.
Therefore in that order which he has established
or which they already had,
let the brethren approach to receive the kiss of peace and Communion,
intone the Psalms and stand in choir.
And in no place whatever should age decide the order
or be prejudicial to it;
for Samuel and Daniel as mere boys judged priests.
Except for those already mentioned, therefore,
whom the Abbot has promoted by a special decision
or demoted for definite reasons,
all the rest shall take their order
according to the time of their entrance.
Thus, for example,
he who came to the monastery at the second hour of the day,
whatever be his age or his dignity,
must know that he is junior
to one who came at the first hour of the day.
Boys, however, are to be kept under discipline

in all matters and by everyone.
The juniors, therefore, should honor their seniors,
and the seniors love their juniors.
In the very manner of address,
let no one call another by the mere name;
but let the seniors call their juniors Brothers,
and the juniors call their seniors Fathers,
by which is conveyed the reverence due to a father.
But the Abbot,
since he is believed to represent Christ,
shall be called Lord and Abbot,
not for any pretensions of his own
but out of honor and love for Christ.
Let the Abbot himself reflect on this,
and show himself worthy of such an honor.
And wherever the brethren meet one another
the junior shall ask the senior for his blessing.
When a senior passes by,
a junior shall rise and give him a place to sit,
nor shall the junior presume to sit with him
unless his senior bid him,
that it may be as was written,
“In honor anticipating one another.”
Boys, both small and adolescent,
shall keep strictly to their rank in oratory and at table.
But outside of that, wherever they may be,
let them be under supervision and discipline,
until they come to the age of discretion.

64: On Constituting an Abbess.

In the constituting of an Abbess
let this plan always be followed,
that the office be conferred on the one who is chosen
either by the whole community unanimously in the fear of God
or else by a part of the community, however small,
if its counsel is more wholesome.
Merit of life and wisdom of doctrine
should determine the choice of the one to be constituted,
even if she be the last of the order of the community.
But if (which God forbid)
the whole community should agree to choose a person
who will acquiesce in their vices,
and if those vices somehow become known to the Bishop
to whose diocese the place belongs,
or to the Abbots, Abbesses or the faithful of the vicinity,
let them prevent the success of this conspiracy of the wicked,

and set a worthy steward over the house of God.
They may be sure
that they will receive a good reward for this action
if they do it with a pure intention and out of zeal for God;
as, on the contrary, they will sin if they fail to do it.
Once she has been constituted,
let the Abbess always bear in mind
what a burden she has undertaken
and to whom she will have to give an account of her stewardship,
and let her know that her duty is rather to profit her sisters
than to preside over them.
She must therefore be learned in the divine law,
that she may have a treasure of knowledge
from which to bring forth new things and old.
She must be chaste, sober and merciful.
Let her exalt mercy above judgment,
that she herself may obtain mercy.
She should hate vices;
she should love the sisterhood.
In administering correction
she should act prudently and not go to excess,
lest in seeking too eagerly to scrape off the rust
she break the vessel.
Let her keep her own frailty ever before her eyes
and remember that the bruised reed must not be broken.
By this we do not mean that she should allow vices to grow;
on the contrary, as we have already said,
she should eradicate them prudently and with charity,
in the way which may seem best in each case.
Let her study rather to be loved than to be feared.
Let her not be excitable and worried,
nor exacting and headstrong,
nor jealous and over-suspicious;
for then she is never at rest.
In her commands let her be prudent and considerate;
and whether the work which she enjoins
concerns God or the world,
let her be discreet and moderate,
bearing in mind the discretion of holy Jacob, who said,
“If I cause my flocks to be overdriven,
they will all die in one day.”
Taking this, then, and other examples of discretion,
the mother of virtues,
let her so temper all things
that the strong may have something to strive after,
and the weak may not fall back in dismay.

And especially let her keep this Rule in all its details,
so that after a good ministry
she may hear from the Lord what the good servant heard
who gave the fellow-servants wheat in due season:
“Indeed, I tell you, he will set that one over all his goods” (Matt. 24:27).

65: On the Prior of the Monastery.

It happens all too often that the constituting of a Prior
gives rise to grave scandals in monasteries.
For there are some who become inflated with the evil spirit of pride
and consider themselves second Abbots.
By usurping power
they foster scandals and cause dissensions in the community.
Especially does this happen
in those places where the Prior is constituted
by the same Bishop or the same Abbots
who constitute the Abbot himself.
What an absurd procedure this is
can easily be seen;
for it gives the Prior an occasion for becoming proud
from the very time of his constitution,
by putting the thought into his mind
that he is freed from the authority of his Abbot:
“For,” he will say to himself, “you were constituted
by the same persons who constitute the Abbot.”
From this source are stirred up envy, quarrels, detraction,
rivalry, dissensions and disorders.
For while the Abbot and the Prior are at variance,
their souls cannot but be endangered by this dissension;
and those who are under them,
currying favor with one side or the other,
go to ruin.
The guilt for this dangerous state of affairs
rests on the heads of those
whose action brought about such disorder.
To us, therefore, it seems expedient
for the preservation of peace and charity
that the Abbot have in his hands
the full administration of his monastery.
And if possible let all the affairs of the monastery,
as we have already arranged,
be administered by deans according to the Abbot's directions.
Thus, with the duties being shared by several,
no one person will become proud.
But if the circumstances of the place require it,
or if the community asks for it with reason and with humility,

and the Abbot judges it to be expedient,
let the Abbot himself constitute as his Prior
whomsoever he shall choose
with the counsel of God-fearing brethren.
That Prior, however, shall perform respectfully
the duties enjoined on him by his Abbot
and do nothing against the Abbot's will or direction;
for the more he is raised above the rest,
the more carefully should he observe the precepts of the Rule.
If it should be found that the Prior has serious faults,
or that he is deceived by his exaltation and yields to pride,
or if he should be proved to be a despiser of the Holy Rule,
let him be admonished verbally up to four times.
If he fails to amend,
let the correction of regular discipline be applied to him.
But if even then he does not reform,
let him be deposed from the office of Prior
and another be appointed in his place who is worthy of it.
And if afterwards he is not quiet and obedient in the community,
let him even be expelled from the monastery.
But the Abbot, for his part, should bear in mind
that he will have to render an account to God
for all his judgments,
lest the flame of envy or jealousy be kindled in his soul.

66: On the Porters of the Monastery.

At the gate of the monastery
let there be placed a wise old woman,
who knows how to receive and to give a message,
and whose maturity will prevent her from straying about.
This porter should have a room near the gate,
so that those who come may always find someone at hand
to attend to their business.
And as soon as anyone knocks or a poor person hails her,
let her answer "Thanks be to God" or "A blessing!"
Then let her attend to them promptly,
with all the meekness inspired by the fear of God
and with the warmth of charity.
Should the porter need help,
let her have one of the younger sisters.
If it can be done,
the monastery should be so established
that all the necessary things,
such as water, mill, garden and various workshops,
may be within the enclosure,
so that there is no necessity

for the sisters to go about outside of it,
since that is not at all profitable for their souls.
We desire that this Rule be read often in the community,
so that none of the sisters may excuse herself
on the ground of ignorance.

67: On Brethren Who are Sent on a Journey.

Let the brethren who are sent on a journey
commend themselves
to the prayers of all the brethren and of the Abbot;
and always at the last prayer of the Work of God
let a commemoration be made of all absent brethren.
When brethren return from a journey,
at the end of each canonical Hour of the Work of God
on the day they return,
let them lie prostrate on the floor of the oratory
and beg the prayers of all
on account of any faults
that may have surprised them on the road,
through the seeing or hearing of something evil,
or through idle talk.
And let no one presume to tell another
whatever he may have seen or heard outside of the monastery,
because this causes very great harm.
But if anyone presumes to do so,
let him undergo the punishment of the Rule.
And let him be punished likewise who would presume
to leave the enclosure of the monastery
and go anywhere or do anything, however small,
without an order from the Abbot.

68: If a Sister is Commanded to do Impossible Things.

If it happens
that difficult or impossible tasks are laid on a sister,
let her nevertheless receive the order of the one in authority
with all meekness and obedience.
But if she sees that the weight of the burden
altogether exceeds the limit of her strength,
let her submit the reasons for her inability
to the one who is over her
in a quiet way and at an opportune time,
without pride, resistance, or contradiction.
And if after these representations
the Superior still persists in her decision and command,
let the subject know that this is for her good,
and let her obey out of love,

trusting in the help of God.

69: That the Monks Presume Not to Defend one Another.

Care must be taken that no monk presume on any ground
to defend another monk in the monastery,
or as it were to take him under his protection,
even though they be united by some tie of blood-relationship.
Let not the monks dare to do this in any way whatsoever,
because it may give rise to most serious scandals.
But if anyone breaks this rule,
let him be severely punished.

70: that No One Venture to Punish at Random.

Every occasion of presumption
shall be avoided in the monastery,
and we decree that no one be allowed
to excommunicate or to strike any of her sisters
unless the Abbess has given her the authority.
Those who offend in this matter
shall be rebuked in the presence of all,
that the rest may have fear.
But children up to 15 years of age
shall be carefully controlled and watched by all,
yet this too with all moderation and discretion.
All, therefore, who presume
without the Abbess' instructions
to punish those above that age
or who lose their temper with them,
shall undergo the discipline of the Rule;
for it is written,
“Do not do to another what you would not want done to yourself” (Tobias 4:16).

71: that the Brethren be Obedient to One Another.

Not only is the boon of obedience
to be shown by all to the Abbot,
but the brethren are also to obey one another,
knowing that by this road of obedience they are going to God.
Giving priority, therefore, to the commands of the Abbot
and of the Superior appointed by him
(to which we allow no private orders to be preferred),
for the rest
let all the juniors obey their seniors
with all charity and solicitude.
But if anyone is found contentious,
let him be corrected.
And if any brother,

for however small a cause,
is corrected in any way by the Abbot or by any of his Superiors,
or if he faintly perceives
that the mind of any Superior is angered or moved against him,
however little,
let him at once, without delay,
prostrate himself on the ground at his feet
and lie there making satisfaction
until that emotion is quieted with a blessing.
But if anyone should disdain to do this,
let him undergo corporal punishment
or, if he is stubborn, let him be expelled from the monastery.

72: On the Good Zeal Which They Ought to Have.

Just as there is an evil zeal of bitterness
which separates from God and leads to hell,
so there is a good zeal
which separates from vices and leads to God
and to life everlasting.
This zeal, therefore, the sisters should practice
with the most fervent love.
Thus they should anticipate one another in honor (Rom. 12:10);
most patiently endure one another's infirmities,
whether of body or of character;
vie in paying obedience one to another —
no one following what she considers useful for herself,
but rather what benefits another — ;
tender the charity of sisterhood chastely;
fear God in love;
love their Abbess with a sincere and humble charity;
prefer nothing whatever to Christ.
And may He bring us all together to life everlasting!

73: On the Fact that the Full Observance of Justice.

Now we have written this Rule
in order that by its observance in monasteries
we may show that we have attained some degree of virtue
and the rudiments of the religious life.
But for those who would hasten to the perfection of that life
there are the teaching of the holy Fathers,
the observance of which leads to the height of perfection.
For what page or what utterance
of the divinely inspired books of the Old and New Testaments
is not a most unerring rule for human life?
Or what book of the holy Catholic Fathers
does not loudly proclaim

how we may come by a straight course to our Creator?
Then the Conferences and the Institutes
and the Lives of the Fathers,
as also the Rule of our holy Father Basil —
what else are they but tools of virtue
for right-living and obedient monks?
But for us who are lazy and ill-living and negligent
they are a source of shame and confusion.
Whoever you are, therefore,
who are hastening to the heavenly homeland,
fulfil with the help of Christ
this minimum Rule which we have written for beginners;
and then at length under God's protection
you will attain to the loftier heights of doctrine and virtue
which we have mentioned above.

<http://www.osb.org/rb/text/toc.html#toc>